

THE

ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

WIRE

ISSUE 169 • MARCH 98 • £2.50 US\$5.50

Terry Callier
into the
mystic

Suicide's
jukebox

FUTURE SOUND OF BERLIN

Moving on with **PORTER RICKS**
CHAIN REACTION, VAINQUEUR, MONOLAKE,
SUBSTANCE & VARIOUS ARTISTS

Fela Kuti
to live and
die in Lagos

Buckethead

**Toshinori
Kondo**

Porace

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**Reflections
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live



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AS THIS, WHOSE COMPLAINING"
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your monthly exploration of new music

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STCD 3007

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& THE AFRO 70
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STCD 3010

Afrobeat at its best in 1975. The title track clocks in at 14:54 and the other two 'Suegbe & Peko' and 'Gbagada Gbagodo' are only a little shorter – but these grooves never wear thin.

FELA RANSOME KUTI
& THE NIGERIA 70
THE '69 LOS ANGELES SESSIONS
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FELA RANSOME KUTI
& THE AFRO 70
HE MISS POND
STCD 3006

Back in Lagos, Nigene, in 1973, Fela and his expanded and renamed band recorded this album for EMI Nigeria with Ginger Baker serving as producer.

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editor's idea

"Orchestras to suit your mood" it says at the head of the press release from the Department of Music at the University of York, suggesting an uneasy, not to mention unlikely, rapprochement between the world of academia and *The World Of Ray Conniff*.

These knee-jerk definitions of mood music are funny, don't you think? An orchestra to suit my present mood, for instance, would have to consist of Merbow duetting with a section of vocoder-wielding Mongolian throat-singers while the Drummers of Burundi beat a tattoo on the back of a nuclear warhead. But according to the scholarly burghers of York, as far as music is concerned the range of human emotions can be served by "the contemporary big band repertoire, swing standards, symphonic and experimental jazz" on the one hand, and on the other, an "unashamedly romantic" programme of orchestral works by Prokofiev.

It's not often we see those words 'experimental' and 'romantic' siding up to each other, on a press release or otherwise, and that use of the word 'unashamedly' suggests a defensive rear-guard action on a par with Julian Lloyd Webber's recent attack on the tyranny of modernism in classical music.

This latter offensive was also the cause of some amusement, as Julian berated contemporary music critics for their elevation of Harrison Birtwistle and other serialist killers over the likes of his good self and Michael Nyman, who are presumably labouring in obscure penury as a consequence.

Actually, Lloyd Webber and Nyman have done all right, thank you very much, out of the Classic FM-driven impulse to transpose the classical repertoire into mood music for fast-track cosmopolitans, but that's not enough, obviously. Julian wants *critical* recognition.

I suspect Harrison Birtwistle, who has the recognition if not the off-shore deposit account, would regard any attempt to redefine his compositions as mood music as a critical slight. Well, *Plano* is a mood, I guess, and in fact the only Birtwistle music I have heard and then wanted to hear again is a film soundtrack, and soundtracks, as

Michael Nyman will tell you, are all about moods.

I'm talking about Ham's electronic score for Sidney Lumet's brilliant 1973 psycho-thriller *The Offence*, in which bad cop Sean Connery and suspected child molester Ian Bannen play out a very dangerous game of cat and mouse amid the rain-soaked, fluorescent-lit concrete towers of an unnamed UK satellite town. Birtwistle's score is not only one of the great lost soundtracks, a neglected footnote in the history of electronic music, it is also mood music par excellence. Admittedly, the mood as defined by Lumet is pure noir. "A tortuous psychological study on the fringes of hysteria", as *Hallwell's Film And Video Guide* puts it, suburban, paranoid, and loaded with sexual menace and frustration... but it's a mood, none the less, and Birtwistle's score shadows it to a tee.

Now I'm thinking about it, I could make a case for classifying all the music I have been listening to of late as mood music of one hue or another. Among other trivial pursuits, I have been running to catch up with CD reissues of favourite records already owned as deprecating vinyl stock, guitarist Pat Martino's 1970 *Desperado* — music for moody modernists, The Pop Group's *Y* — music for manic modernists, Isaac Hayes's smouldering, sensual *Joy* — music to put you in the mood. Even Don Cherry's 1976 masterpiece *Brown Rice*, which, once Herbie Hancock's *Sextant* and Bennie Maupin's *Jewel In The Lotus* have been tagged and bagged, is Exhibit C in the case for Fourth World electric jazz being the moodiest music category of all time. On one level, the records' four tracks can be heard as studio-bound outcroppings of the quest Don embarked upon after leaving Ornette Coleman's group in the 1960s: as he told critic Francis Davis in 1983, "I wanted to play different instruments in environments not man-made for music — natural settings like a catscomb or on a mountain top or by the side of a lake. It was the idea of organic music — music as a natural part of your day." Music to suit your mood.

TONY HARRINGTON

Coming with the April issue of *The Wire*
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soundings

Selected highlights of the month's live events, happenings, club spaces and broadcasts

Festivals/Special Events



Thomson Hoven at Interference

Interference A series of themed forums, co-curated by *The Wire* and London Electronic Arts, and taking in talks, sound demonstrations, screenings and live music, begins this month. The first is subtitled *Thomson Hoven* and is devoted to the 'look no hands' electronic instrument pioneered by Pinchard and Scanner. Former *Wire* Editor Mark Fisher, who is presently writing a history of the technology of music, gives a talk about the instrument. Pink Pinks Kuno will demonstrate how to play one. And electronic instrument builder/composer Walter Fabick will demonstrate his own invention, the Chromasone. 18 March. 8-10pm. The Lux Centre, 2-4 Hoxton Square, N1. £6/£3 concs, booking 011 71 684 0201. Information 011 71 684 7787

Taktiles 96 'Hertweg Shop' (owner star of *The Wire* 168) opens the 15th Swiss Improv Festival, taking place in Basel and Zurich, with an independent but related electronic event under the same umbrella happening in Bern. The programme, playing first in Basel, then the following night in Zurich, is as follows: *Hertweg Shop Trio*, *Indis Cooke Trio* and *Biliger Bauer*. *The Incredible Sound Of Urban Farmers* (Basel 26 March; Zurich 27), *Yrene Schweizer & Harald Dulak*, *Paul Durrall Trio*, *Jean Derom's Hommage A Georges Peres* (Basel, 27 Zurich 28), *Anniemore Reibel's & Elina Plener*, *Bigg Violoncello Trio*, *Fred Van Hove Nonet* (Basel 28 March, 29). The Basel concerts are at Kulturwerkstatt Kaserne. Kyochostrasse 18 in Zurich at Rotte Fabrik. Seestrasse 395. All concerts start at 8pm, information 00 441 272 150001/272 1501, Website

www.hugo.ch/taktiles96 Taktiles Bern, meanwhile, focuses on the possibilities of live electronics and features Marianne Amacher and Gordon Monahan (27 March, 8-10pm), and Separator (Hans Pitzgumer, Peter Hollinger and Albert Poschi). Jim O'Rourke and Tomorrow's John McEwan as The Okeanos Scanner, DJ Spooky and DJ Southbridge (28 March 8-10pm). For information about venues, contact Peter Kraut at Taktiles Bern. 00 441 31 333 3530/33 333 3610 e-mail kraut@bluewin.ch

LOSTfest 96 Subtitled 'Strange Fruits Nature's Mutations' this multimedia arts festival brings together an intriguing mix of music, experimental film, performance art and theatre — sometimes all at once culminating in a concert by Evan Parker and real-time electronic sound processor Lawrence Casselley. Another highlight is *London-Alice Encounter!*, an hour-long live one-to-one channel-sound and visual internet link bringing together musicians and performance artists, among them Lawrence Casselley, Yves Rosgauss and Frederic Lopez in a real-time event 'that warps geographical and cultural distances'. The full programme is as follows: *Chausseuse Fabienne Audred & L Orange* (25 March, 7pm), experimental music/film units *Dust Oscure* and *Evelyn Picard/Suse Bose*, and performance artist *Platzhorn Boyle* (also 25 March). *Trauce* magic from Polish composer/performer *Amelia Ximena Gonia*, (26 March). *Roberto Mendez* *Lozage's film Wop N'it* film, *hainpachidai* Joe Lockett *Choirman* and percussionist *Steve Jackson* and a dance piece, *Twining* (also 26 March). *Cello Howie Benaim* and *Croquet* secondment, *Ragna Alexander* (27 March), Jane Turner's dance/film/visuals *Compost* and *London-Alice Encounter* (also 27 March). A sonic/visual installation, *CRP 126* (27 March), a dance piece *Hybrid* and *Evan Parker & Lawrence Casselley* (also 28 March). 7pm events in the bar, 8pm events in the theatre at London Civic, £8/£5 concs per night, £24/£20 season tickets, box office 011 71 930 3647 information 011 71 359 7825

Women Of Africa A groundbreaking collaboration of four of Africa's leading women artists goes on tour in the UK. It brings together *Matis Wassoulou* (also *Gumbe*), *Sangare*, *Soukaina Aissa*, *Yvonne Sogbongu*, *Khumalo*, *Medagassari's Henriette Rasoanono* and *Cameron vokalpercussion* *Shirley Nyoko* (formerly of *Zao Mama*). They will perform individually and together, backed by a pan-African group. *Spooky Theatre* (2 March

01790 752936). **Liverpool Philharmonic Hall** (3 0151 709 3789). **Cowentry Warwick Arts Centre** (4, 01203 524524). **Basingstoke The Arnel** (5, 01256 844244). **London Royal Festival Hall** (6, 0171 970 4201). **Cambridge Corn Exchange** (7 01223 357851).

Ionic Outlaws Craig Baldwin's video documentary about US media hackers *Negativland* and pluridisciplinary artists John Oswald and Emergency Broadcast Network is screened at *Censorship And Artistic Dissent*, a self-explanatory two day conference featuring talks, presentations, discussions, film and live art. The Phonies Art Gallery, High Street, Colchester, 21-22 March. 10am start, £25/£15 concs for both days, £15/£7 50 day ticket information 01206 5177301

Other Music Spring Festival Experimental and improvised music, featuring *Kenny Process* Team, *Hick Back's Something Else* (26 March, 8pm), and *Steve Noble's John Teller/Rat* Thomas John Edwards and John Russell (28 Bpm), both at Sheffield The Grapes. *Tripnet Lure* plus sound installations by *Neil Carter* (27) and *Helmut Lemke* (28) in Sheffield Orchard Square, both starting 2pm, and a 'walk-through experience' with *Martin Archer* and others, *Maptan Art Gallery*, *Weston Park* (29). For full details call *Other Music* 0114 258 4999 or University of Sheffield Music Dept 0114 244 4550

Musicalance 96 The UK's only business convention for the non-mainstream music industry. Talks, seminars, surgeries on all aspects of the industry, plus showcases at London Barclay and Spix, 7-8 March, information 0181 374 4207, e-mail musicalance@btinternet.com

On Stage

Rescue Celebrates Carter Le grand Pierre conducts the LSO through two concerts marking the 50th birthday of American composer Elliott Carter. *London Barbican*, Silk Street EC2, 12 and 22 March 7-10pm, £5-£30 0171 638 8891

Matis Gustafsson in a trio with *Rat Thomas* and *John Butcher*, plus poet *Bob Cobbing* and *Hugh Maclellan* at *Reading Resing Sun* (1 March) *Brighon Hill* (2)

The Grandmother Featuring three of Frank Zappa's original Mothers Of Invention — *Don Preston*, *Jimmy Carl Black*, and *Buck Gardner* — at *London Astoria*, 157 Ching Cross Road, W1, 13 March 7pm, £10, 0171 434 9592

Kazuko Hohki The Frank Chicken goes solo with a performance of *Footnotes*, an "examination of a relationship with a mother, a country and death", with music by *Wine writer Cive Bell* at *London Oval House*, 52-54 Kennington Oval, SE11, 5-8 March, 8pm, £7/£4.50, 0171 582 7680. Then at *Southampton Garry*, off Blectynham Terrace (14, Bpm, 0170 322 9319), and *London Crows Palace*, 42 Brookly Walk, E9 (20-21, Bpm 0181 986 6714)

June Of 44 American atrocity stories on tour at *Leeds Dures* of York (3 March), *Gangway* 13th Nov (4)

Morphogenesis/Jed Nuttall Veteran improvisers plus poet at *London The Kinkor*, Sussex Pub, 1074 Colford Road, N1, 24 March, 8-10pm, £4/£3 concs 0181 806 8216

Pram push their electronic avant rock/ electronics hybrid at *Wolverhampton Variety* (11 March), *Oxford The Port* (12), *London The Garage* (14), *Brighon The Lift* (15), *Leicester Phayzo* (17), *Manchester Night and Gay* (19), *Glasgow King Tuts* (20)

Rex New York alt.country rock quartet at *London Upstairs* at the *Garage*, 20-22 Highbury Corner (8 March), *Manchester Star & Garter* (9)

Dom Um Romao Brazilian baculada percussionist and sometime *Weather Report* collaborator at *Manchester Band on the Wall*, 25 Swan Street, Bristol, £7.50, 0161 834 1786

George Russell Radical jazz theorist and composer and his *Living Time Orchestra*, featuring soloists *Andy Sheppard*, *Chris Blackwell* and *Shirley Davis*, *London Barbican*, Silk Street, EC2, 7 March, 7-10pm, £8/50-£15.50, 0171 638 8891

Pharoah Sanders brings his new American group to *London Queen Elizabeth Hall*, South Bank, 27 March, 7.45pm, £15/£12.50 0171 960 4242

Suicide Notorious New York electro-minimalist hoodlum duo, with *Panasonic* supporting at *London The Garage*, 20-22 Highbury Corner, N1, 5-8 March, £10, 0171 607 1818

Tortoise promote their new album *TWT*, with side project *Isotope 217* supporting at *Brighon Pavilion* (25 March), *Glasgow Arson* (30), *Leeds The Coconut* (31). More dates follow in April

Ultramarine launch their album *Alien's Guide To The Clinic*, 13 Gerrard Street, W1, 4 March 10pm, £4/£3 concs, 0171 228 6616

letters

Write to: Letters, The Wire, 45-46 Poland Street, London W1V 3DF,

or fax: 0171 287 4767, or e-mail: the_wire@ukonline.co.uk Please include a full name and address. Every letter published wins a FREE CD

Peter out

Over the past couple of issues I have become more and more preoccupied with one question: why the fuck does Peter Shapiro keep reviewing/getting to review all that electronic music? Or at least all that drum 'n' bass. It's quite obvious he hates the entire 'drill 'n' bass/punk jazz' sub-genre, as well as almost the entire 'dark Jungle/drum 'n' bass-type genre (Technstep, Arcion 2 type stuff, I imagine), and thus we are treated to a whole lot of bitter (even sour!) tirades against each artist. I mean, starting a review with 'I was prepared to loathe this' (The Wire 168), and in fact using the word "loathsome" somewhere else on that page as well — really, it's just not necessary. If you don't like it, don't listen to it: it is a very good maxim to follow. In Peter Shapiro's case he could immediately stop listening to anything vaguely drum 'n' bass-y.

Peter's big problem seems to be with any music that shows an artist using their brain a bit. Seems like if it doesn't have a bloody obvious beat (making it 'funny', I presume), Peter just can't cope and goes into 'too-clever-by-half', 'give these guys a job' mode. At least I know that if Peter Shapiro hates it then I'll have a good chance of liking it, and at least I'm still alerted to the existence of these releases, but honestly Wire, do we need this unending stream of vomit? We can now all safely write our own Peter Shapiro reviews of this kind of music, so let's have someone a little more open-minded review them instead. In all other respects, The Wire continues to educate, interest and amuse every month. Thank you!

Peter Hollo via e-mail

Verve swerve

I'm probably not the first to point this out: regarding Simon Hopkins's Tony Williams Lifetime review (Soundcheck, The Wire 168), he states that PolyGram have finally released Lifetime's first two albums complete on CD rather than as an anthology. Perhaps Simon was in short pants at the time, but he ought to know that *Emergency* was released intact on one CD by PolyGram on Polydor (the group's original label) in 1991 (Polydor B490682). I know, because I have one. It's immediately remained available at least until the appearance of the anthology he mentions, ie 1996.

Incidentally, what is it about the current Verve operation that makes it seemingly so eager to 'reclaim' valuable jazz material which, at the time, it had absolutely nothing to do with? Trying, pseudo, to be 'all things to all men', or merely a convenient corporate umbrella?

Erik Gerritsen Amstterdam, Netherlands

Riff tide

I feel compelled to put inkjet to paper just now, because I've read and enjoyed Peter Shapiro's Epiphany column (The Wire 167) — a perfect complement to everything else not 'Un-Wire', as Peter succinctly says. I am anxious to put in my two cents here, and learn why Peter neglected to include Soundgarden's 'Flower' from the *UltraMega OK* record. I can only assume he has decided that anyone whose music contributes to the pyramid scheme that is hard rock after Black Sabbath is disqualified. Fair enough, I suppose, but the pyramid has not collapsed yet (Playboy Cornell, Thuyli et of sensed its foundations shaking... I Dr, for that matter, Bad Brains' late effort 'Take Craft', or The Detroit Emeralds' 'Baby Let Me Take You', or etc.

Tom Welsh New Albion Records, San Francisco, USA

Back to basics

Once again, the end of year review (The Wire 167) was highly readable, although there were even fewer records I had purchased than last year (only two, as opposed to six in 1996, and over 15 in 1997). This is, to my mind, indicative of an overall direction change of the magazine. However, it would be nice to think that the excellent Mark Hollis feature (same issue) represents the start of a swing back to a more all-embracing ethos where there is also room for less (supposedly) avant garde artists. Talk Talk's *Spirit Of Eden* was quite rightly identified by Rob Young as one of the best and most important albums of the 80s. Peter Shapiro's hilarious back page on Black Sabbath also deserves mention, perhaps my disappointment at the self-imposed silence of David Toop will be tempered by the new Epiphany column.

Returning to the Hollis feature and the issues I believe it raises for The Wire, I would love to see The Primer — a great idea but a little predictable in its subjects so far. 'Sun Ra, Zappa (Actually, we haven't done Frank yet... Etc), Tom, Grateful Dead' cover some of the great and good of British and European music, eg John Martyn, Eno, John Cale, David Sylvian, Can, Jan Garbarek/ECM (don't get Ben Watson to write it!), even Van Morrison. Also Pat Smith would be very welcome. While I commend the continuing sterling efforts of labels like Touch, the law of diminishing returns which seems to characterise much of the ever burgeoning morass of Electronica, and dissuades one from even bothering half the time to try and sort the wheat from the chaff, makes it even more imperative for your magazine to guide listeners towards alternative sources of enlightenment, past or present.

Neil Horner via e-mail

You're so vein

Way back in the 1980s, The Wire nurtured and confirmed so many of my musical loves, such as Coltrane, Reich, Eno and Beethoven. It also enabled me to discover gems I had been missing, like Eric Dolphy or Harold Budd. In recent years I've struggled to stay on board as the music you write about is often so difficult to access that I never know whether it might be for me (I however, thank you for Philip Brophy's excellent film music series).

In the latest issue, however, I could really reconnect Vancose veins (Editorial, The Wire 167) — now you're talking! Had one leg done in 1982 and that one's never looked back, although I'm getting some gip from the other one now. Your editorial gave me the nudge and I'm off to the quacks next week — if it's OK for The Wire, it's hip enough for me.

Dave Allen Portsmouth

Draw a cheque and follow it

If La Monte Young was willing to make any money, he'd be a multi-millionaire. The charity concert organised by Pulp (on Location, The Wire 166) was possible because his music is popular. I would have preferred if charity went to starving children who didn't have a potpourri of several million dollars if they went ahead and sold some of their tapes and scores, wrote their autobiographies, gave some concerts and lectures, and so on. If that charity concert has saved Young's financial skin, he can go on not releasing any records and not publishing anything on his music themes — what a loss to us!

Think about it if La Monte Young's situation becomes desperate enough, he'll be forced to sit down with John Cale, Tony Conrad and a neutral lawyer to negotiate a release of those legendary 1963 recordings.

Anders Moe Oslo, Norway

Corrections

Issue 168 The Skint and Apollo/R&S labels are distributed by JMW/Pinnacle, not Vital as stated in Bites and Soundcheck. Also in Soundcheck, the distributor for the Discipline Global Mobile label should have been listed as Pinnacle. Apologies to anyone expecting reviews of Holger Czupak, Scanner and Terre Thaumitz as flagged on last month's Contents page. The reviews went AWOL at the last minute. They now appear in this issue. Issue 167 Helmut Lermie's Phonic Art course takes place at the Hull School of Art & Design at the University of Lincolnshire & Humberside, not the University of Hull as stated in Bites. For information, contact 01482 440550. In Soundcheck, the correct phonetic number for the Megalotop label should have been 00 39 187 627893 ☐



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global ear

Laos

Tanky Lady, A-lo Haha, Rock Cable, Cup-Pa, Jelly Boy and Jockey: just a few of the exotic ice cream sundae names available at the Sweet Home Bakery, a street cafe in Vientiane. I jot down their names as a souvenir of my final night in Laos. In the balmy warmth of the late December evening I pick my way back to the hotel over the chaotic slabs of pavement, taking care not to fall down a drain. Like most of the capital's population, I am tucked up in bed by 10pm.

Laos is a landlocked strip of South East Asia between Thailand and Vietnam, the river Mekong forming most of its western border. One of the poorest countries in the world, it also has the dubious distinction of being the most heavily bombed nation per capita in the history of warfare. In the Palace Museum in Luang Prabang is a fragment of moon rock, presented to the Lao people by US President Richard Nixon in 1973 — the same year that the US finally stopped saturation bombing of eastern Laos, the secret footnote to the history of the Vietnam war.

Laos now has a fairly liberal communist government — elections of a sort were held while I was there in December. At 6.30 each morning loudspeakers awaken the population with a patriotic ballad — not a strident march, more a dreamy evocation of the river and mountains — and official announcements are read out. I was pleased to hear what seemed to be a quaint survival of communist public radio, though I was later told that the main information being broadcast was the lottery results.

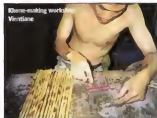
In the past couple of years visa regulations have eased up, and it's now fairly straightforward to enter Laos and travel independently. My main interest in going there, apart from a long-term love affair with South East Asia in general, was to track down the khene, a large bamboo mouthorgan. The khene is to Laos as the bagpipe is to Scotland, only more so: inextricably tied to the national identity, the sight and sound of this bouncing cluster of tubes makes the Laotian heart beat faster. The khene player blows, sucks, wheezes and often dances while playing — it's a mouth-driven accordion, and is in fact the ancestor of the accordion, harmonica and all other Western "free reed" instruments.

The Laotians are famously the people who eat "sticky rice" (steamed rice served in baskets and eaten with the

A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month



French excavators taking a khene player in a hill-tribe village south of Luang Prabang



fingers) and play the khene. Not that you would guess from walking around the capital, of course. Not a khene in sight anywhere, and you might conclude that Laotians are the people who play badminton with small balloons, or spectacular lock-volleyball with their feet, or simply sit on the porch strumming a cheap acoustic guitar made in China. But with a little perseverance and a lot of luck, I succeeded in meeting musicians, largely thanks to Dr Jean-Marie Dudom Souvannavong.

Dr Jean-Marie is an elderly man of boundless energy, wheeling a bicycle and wearing a military radio telephone around his neck. I met him in the street on my first night in Vientiane and half of what he told me is true, he is the most extraordinary person I have ever met. He returned to Laos in 1989 after several years in France, where he had four children, five wives and was in jail six times for political agitation. While apparently involved in many aspects of Lao

government planning (hydroelectric projects, purchase of small aircraft in lot form, gold mining) and in daily communication with military and religious leaders, he still seemed content to spend every evening introducing me to the musicians, artists and chefs of Vientiane, most of whom seemed to be distantly related to Dr Jean-Marie Souvannavong himself. "Vientiane is the town of the Souvannavongs," he told me. "There are 2500 of us here. When we hold a get-together, the government thinks it's a coup d'état."

Our daily meeting place was a bar across the street from the Lao Opera. I was excited to discover the Lao Opera, and resolved to go every night, but nothing ever happened there. It's a small, purpose-built theatre, completely empty and with no equipment. Apparently there is a resident company of musicians, but they are always touring the country.

One evening Dr Jean-Marie brought along a singer called Somwan — she was booked to sing at a party that night, so we all set off in convoy, the doctor and Somwan aboard a couple of friends' motorbikes, and myself in a tuk-tuk motorcycle taxi. Neither the tuk-tuk driver nor I had any idea where the party was, so we spent the next hour puzzling in and out of the potholes lining the roads of Vientiane's northern suburbs, until I was rescued by Dr Jean-Marie on yet another motorbike.

By this time the party was in full cry, on a raised platform sat three singers and a khene player, closely surrounded by party guests. Each singer takes a turn on the mic, improvising five minutes or so of ribald poetry,

full of flirtation and amorous innuendo, over the rhythmic churning of the khene. The guests clap in rhythm, pass money to the musicians, and generally keep up a supportive background racket, fuelled by waitresses passing by dispensing a potent rice homebrew called lao-lao.

This kind of singing is called 'Mo Lam' — I've heard calm performances on clean recordings in the past, but it's exciting to be thrust into the middle of a sozzled, hilarious crowd like this and hear the singers swap mocking flattery through the vicious amplification system. I am trying to make a recording while the resident party drunk bellows repeatedly in my ear. One of the singers, Soulsak, is a young monk, temporarily defrocked so that he can perform. With his shaven head, razor-sharp patterned shirt and rasping delivery, it's hard not to see Mo Lam as a distant cousin of rap. Soulsak turns his attention away from the beautiful Sornwan, his sparring partner in song, and sings directly to me, extemporising a spiel about a foreigner coming to Laos to hear the khene and learn to play it. Gesturing towards Sornwan and the stars in the sky above, he sings encouragement and tells me that if I practise enough I may end up accompanying a lovely singer such as her.

The third singer acts as an MC, introducing the other two. He has a pockmarked face and air of debauchery, and his voice is an extraordinary snarl of wit, like a sped-up Tom Waits. Eventually he reduces the khene player to helpless laughter so that the performance collapses, and everyone can have a drink and a cigarette.

After 1975, at the end of the Vietnam war, around a tenth of the Laotian population left as refugees or to resettle abroad, including a vast number of educated or

middle class Lao. Many, like Dr Jean-Marie himself, are now returning to start businesses, hotels and restaurants. Laos has not suffered a civil war on the scale of neighbouring Cambodia, but after such a turbulent period I was interested to see if traditional music survived in a healthy state. As far as I could tell the signs were encouraging, but this is still an extremely poor country and performers don't have it easy. The finest Mo Lam singer I met was Saman Suwanasee, who has been singing for 35 years, and is clearly very hard up. A dapper, sad-eyed man and a charming performer, he polished his shoes and combed his hair before singing for me, accompanied by the excellent khene player Tong Xuey. Xuey has a job teaching the reading of old Pali manuscripts at the National Library, and buzzes around on a scooter. Improvising solo on the khene, he has a very attractive and relaxed rhythmic style, modal melodies weaving around chordal clusters and drones.

The khene is also played in the hill-tribe villages



south of Luang Phabang, a very gentle music where a single riff is hypnotically repeated. The classical music, very similar to the Thai tradition, also continues. In the beautiful former capital of Luang Phabang I heard a classical seven piece ensemble called Silepakhoon: xylophone, gong circle, two fiddles and percussion. This group played a good repertoire of gamelan-like pieces, and all of them are employed as music teachers in the area.

I also heard the singer Sornwan in a different context, singing pop at a fund-raising dance for a village school outside Viengkam. The PA was cranked up mercilessly, with shocking amounts of echo on the voice, and the accompaniment all came from one deft performer on a Yamaha keyboard with in-built drums and auto-bass. Sornwan and a series of singers (including her mother) supplied an evening of Lao pop songs and Mo Lam workouts while a hundred of us danced, usually in a circle — the strangely delicate Lao way of dancing with the arms, like conducting an orchestra in a slow motion.

On this evening I had fallen in with a small group of French journalists and ad workers. The mayor of the village came over and suggested we make a ceremonial contribution to the school. This was then celebrated with a special dance, six of us men lined up opposite six of the most beautiful local women, who all happened to be on the teaching staff of the school. As I danced with various schoolteachers, I reflected that in situations like this it's hard to understand what's really happening. I thought this again while walking the six kilometres back into town at 2.30am (no tuktuks takes this late). In the dark I passed an armed group of young men, one with a machine gun over his shoulder. They took no notice of me.

CLIVE BELL





Panacea

Turntable terronova

Matis Mootz's primal take on Techstep sounds like it was recorded in the middle of a riot. Jackhammer snare smacks like batons, pounding monomaniacally on the off-beat, while the rest of the mix winches and seethes in an orgy of disorder. When I ask him how he describes his sound, he replies tersely, "Industrial Hardcore Terrorstep".

Given the brutal beats and self-image he projects into the world, it is difficult to conceive that the 21-year-old Mootz, better known as Panacea, spent five years as an angelic chorister in the nationally famous Windsbacher Knabenschor. He abandoned Bach for breakbeats in 1991, after discovering the joys to be had in surrendering to the punishing Electronic Body Music of Nitzer Ebb and Front 242, and the more exuberant hardcore rave of Prodigy, SL2 and Shades Of Rhythm. From such roots his future musical direction sprang. While he was still boarding

at a prestigious Darmstadt school, he used to slip away to soundtrack private parties with what he describes as a "mixture of Teutonic Techno and the happy uplifting sound of UK's early underground". Graduating to the clubs of Mannheim and Frankfurt, his self-defined "uncompromising, hard and psychotic style" won him recognition and audiences to match.

After signing to Force Inc.'s Chrome subdivision in 1996, he didn't so much put out records as commit acts of sonic violence. His releases, such as his 1996 debut album *Low Profile Darkness*, are scarred with ferocious scratching, queasily descending basslines and squalls of pure feedback, while modulating swaths of distortion hover like clouds of nerve gas over the mix.

Amateur psychologists could have a field day with Panacea's music. It would be easy to link his fury to the early death of Mootz's father and his consequent upbringing in a series of academic hosthouses. When I ask him what he is trying to express, he responds, "The anti-principle". At another point, he remarks, "There is so much hate made of me".

There's more to Panacea than hate and fury, although the pleasures to be had from his music are highly ambiguous. At base, it's like a mainline hit of adrenaline, but if you can duck its ugly sonic threat long enough, you'll notice deft architectural strokes, like the way he constructs musical arches over cavernous silences. Mootz describes the "electric, ecstatic" atmosphere of a room when he's DJ'ing, adding, "Playing one of my own tracks always lifts the roof off".

Moments of communal ecstasy are short-lived, however, undermined by Mootz's guerrilla tactic of subjecting his relatively user-friendly, even nostalgic rave samples —

303 basslines, tumbling funk stabs, skits sliced from classics like 1993's *Anastasia* — to unsightly cybernetic mauling. No sooner has he opened the door to simple unconscious abandon than he's slamming it shut again.

Acts like these are political as much as musical: Mootz (along with his fellow Chrome artists) allies himself firmly with the militant Left. He's also a committed straight-edger: "No alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, coffee — I never drank a beer or smoked a cigarette."

Mootz has recently acquired a new alter-ego, Bad Street Boy, whose *Ladykiller* EP is a bizarre exercise in lo-fi porno Electro. Over four tracks, Mootz loops primitive and stupefyingly obvious samples — Madonna's "Justify My Love", Kraftwerk's "Tour De France", Bomb The Bass's "Beat Olé" — to which he appends big, slurred, synthic basslines and what's possibly a live recording of himself engaged in the sexual act. It's a far cry from both the virginal chorister of Mootz's teens and the rigid Marxist disciplinarian responsible for Panacea's menacing Techstep. Or would be if the ramshackle, detuned samples didn't convey an unmistakable sense of disgust. Despite its apparent explicitness, *Bad Street Boy's* output is as ambiguous as Panacea's. Expect his debut album, *Twisted Design*, due later this year, to deliver as many surprises as his music to date.

"When I'm showering while listening to one of my tunes, then I'll put it out," he concludes. "I love that distorted sound, it drives me crazy! Every time when I'm making a track I'm sitting in my studio, beating on my equipment and trying to twist everything to the max!"

CHRIS SHARP Panacea's "Anti-Funk 12" is out now on Chrome. Bad Street Boy's *Ladykiller EP* is out now on Pharma (both through SRO).



Lê Quan Ninh

Anarchic oscillations

"In contemporary classical music the instrumentalist is treated with very little respect," says percussionist Lê Quan Ninh vehemently. "He is like a slave who has to play the most impossible things. It's only when a work is really exceptional that you feel a certain freedom when playing it, but unfortunately that's rarely the case." Freedom is a word that's seldom used in the rigorously structured world of contemporary music, yet it's always been the underlying concern of this iconoclastic Franco-Vietnamese musician. Take, for instance, his work with contemporary percussion ensemble Quatuor Héros, which has long been associated with the name of John Cage. "John Cage is virtually the only composer who offers the performer a certain amount of freedom," explains Ninh. "Furthermore, his music is non-hierarchical in that everything is given equal value, and that for me is an object lesson not only in how to make music, but also in how to live my life."

As a committed anarchist, Lê Quan Ninh clearly has a vested interest in anti-authoritarianism, and his parallel activity as one of the more prominent members of France's thriving Improv scene provides an even more favourable terrain for his libertarian principles. "It's true that I am naturally drawn to improvisation because it is a movement that emphasizes personal responsibility and freedom," he comments. Originally trained as a classical percussionist, he was drawn to the wide-open vistas of improvisation early in his career. "One of the marvellous things about improvisation is that it can bring together musicians from very different cultures. Like many improvisors, my life is a series of encounters." Over the years, his sparring partners have included French saxophonist Michel Doneda, Jim O'Rourke, bassist Peter Kowald, and Elliott Sharp, but perhaps his most memorable experience was his encounter with Butch Morris. "As an improviser, you're constantly questioning what you do, and the great thing about Morris's conductions is that they shed a new light on your gestural habits and the way you interact with others. He'll cut you off when you're in full swing and force you to move on to something else. And that really shakes you up." But Lê Quan Ninh is also a noted solo performer — as testified by his occasional virtuoso performances and by his latest solo CD. Called *Ustensiles*, it consists of a series of intense, percussive landscapes built up out of a disparate battery of utensils that range from a bass drum, Chinese cymbals and a sheet of aluminum through to a handful of chick-peas and an ice-bell.

Ninh has never totally abandoned contemporary music. Since 1986, he has been working with Quatuor Héros, whose repertoire includes works by Toru Takemitsu and Morton Feldman, as well as John Cage. Their latest piece, *Oscile*, was composed by Ninh

himself, and is one of the first pieces in their repertoire to have been written by a member of the quartet.

"Most composers don't know how to write for percussion, they just haven't grasped what it's all about. We have our own conception of percussion, and in future I think we'll write our music ourselves, just as a rock group writes its own songs." *Oscile* is a piece for computer, four stones and four Lightning II. These spatial controllers, designed by Don Buchla, produce music by means of hand-held wands that emit infrared light, thereby enabling a computer to track their movements. At a recent performance of *Oscile*, unearthly whistles and distant thunder merged with the sound of tapping stones and the voice of an actor intoning texts in ancient Vietnamese.

"*Oscile* is a totally interactive work, in which everything you hear is actually played by the musicians, and the machines don't do everything on their own

The musicians themselves trigger the sounds, change the parameters and modify the effects," explains Ninh. This emphasis on interaction is indicative of a new trend in electronic music: alongside such devices as Atau Tanaka's BioMuse or Michel Waisvisz's Hands, the Lightning reasserts the primacy of human gestures. "With this instrument you can see that the performer is doing everything himself and that he's not a mad scientist working the machines," comments Ninh.

Yet *Oscile* also has an autobiographical significance referring as it does to Ninh's oscillation between two cultures: the Vietnamese and the French, and, on another level, to his approach to music. As Ninh himself puts it, fervent and intense to the last. "In the music I make, nothing is certain or established. It's in perpetual motion, and this oscillation is what life is about."

RAHMA KHAZAMI *Ustensiles* is out now on For 4 Ears, Steinechweg 16 CH-4452 Ittigen, Switzerland



PHOTO: EDIE YEE



Taylor Deupree & Savvas Ysatis

Electronic environments

If writing about music is like dancing about architecture, is making music about architecture like writing about dance? Possibly, when the building in question is designed to choreograph a ballet of lights after nightfall. At least, that's what electronic music duo Taylor Deupree and Savvas Ysatis discovered when they were commissioned to produce *Tower Q's Winds*, the first in a series of recordings inspired by architecture, for New York label Caponnia Productions. The building they chose was Toyo Ito's 130-foot-high cylindrical tower, which nestles near the main railway station in Yokohama, Japan. By day, the vertical metal tube remains forbiddingly blank, but after dusk it comes alive, stopping the night with a fountain of coloured lighting effects that are determined by environmental factors such as temperature, wind speed and the city's ambient noise. As Deupree and Ysatis point out in their sleeve notes, while Western cities tend to emphasise permanence and stability in their municipal buildings, Ito's construction reflects the morphing social and geopolitical landscape of the metropolis.

"I think electronic music, much like a city, thrives on being ephemeral," states Deupree from his Brooklyn base, where he records and releases a plethora of music, and maintains a crisply designed website, under the banner of his production company, 12k. "What's more exciting than a city that 'never sleeps', a city that is in constant change? Or a form of music that is constantly reinventing itself?"

Deupree, a 27-year-old New Yorker, and Ysatis, from Greece, know all about reinventing themselves. They've previously released records as SETI (not to be confused with the English releases of the same name by Andrew Lagowski) and Futuze, while Deupree moonlights as a member of Prototype SOS, Human Flesh Dance, Unit

Park, Tiny Objects In Space, Elex and Abe Duzuel's Rancho Rialao All-Stars (a floating collective whose messy Electro jams have produced some of the best releases on the German Disko B label). They met through the defunct NYC label Insect, who hired Deupree to remix one of Ysatis's tracks.

Ito's building "expresses itself" by reacting to the input through its environmental sensors, and Savvas and Taylor arranged their music through a comparable technique of open channeling. "*Tower Q's Winds* gives a new twist to the classic environmental approach," suggests Taylor. "Our sounds are not 'environmental', they are not of trees, and streets and birds and people. Rather, we create a similar feeling using other sounds. We create the environment of the city with sounds that are not of the city. We also approach the record from the building's point of view, not from a specific person or passer-by. I think it is interesting, no matter what the method, to create an environmental record by using electronics. It is very ironic."

Their "environmental" analogue is perpetuated through a general openness to sound and method. Some of the music feels 'live' — there are snatches of drums, bass and guitar taken from ten-year-old recordings of previous groups. "We used anything as a sound source," says Taylor, "and no matter how difficult it seemed when we were building a song, we made it work. This concurred with the idea that environmental music makes use of all sounds occurring at once in any given environment. As far as arrangement goes, we didn't use any keyboards. We did not input any notes by methods of 'playing'. Everything was entered with a mouse, on a grid, at very specific moments. This gave us the random feel by removing us a step or two from the 'musical' entry."

The notion of 'intelligent' buildings gives rise to horror stories — witness Philip K. Dick's futuristic novel *Groin*, in which a corporate headquarters brutally debugs itself of the human viruses inside it. *Tower Q's Winds* takes a far more benign view of Ito's gaudy tube. Deupree: "The rough idea that we had was that we're taking a piece of architecture that used to be nothing — used to be an old building — it was then recycled, transformed by Ito into the piece of art that he envisioned. The title 'Sleepers, There's Much To Do' and the delayed start [to the CD] are part of this portrayal: you have a dead building, a sleeping building, and it's been awakened and brought to life both architecturally and musically."

"We wanted to give this lifeless structure a soul. One way of doing that was to write music, and subsequently come up with titles that were from the building's own perspective. So titles such as 'Picking Up The Change' or 'It's Good To Be Here' — almost writing music from the building's point of view as it reacted to the city around it."

They must have done something right. Toyo Ito has been sent the CD, and, according to Taylor, "It turns out that he really likes it. It is his favourite piece of music right now. We are very happy about that. Very honoured!"

YOUNG *Tower Q's Winds* is out now on Caponnia. Futuze's *Playing Mr So-And-So* is released on Shadow Electronics (both through Cargo). For more information, visit Taylor Deupree's website: www.12k.com

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Roster includes The very best in Japanese underground psychedelia: High Rise, White Heaven, Ghost, Musica Transonic, Acid Mothers Temple, the Tokyo Flashback series, Key Hano (in numerous permutations) and Fushisuzuki, twisted folk legends Kan Mikami and Kazuki Tomokawa, classic and contemporary Japanese free jazz and improv: Motacharu Yoshizawa, Masayuki Takayanagi, Kaoru Abe. Assorted foreign free expressions: Harry Belafonte, Charles Gayle, APM, Borbetomagus and Mike Wilhelm. Almost 100 titles of pure individualism in print. **Description** Championing artists who push out the envelope, PSF reveal the depth, diversity and vitality of the Japanese underground, while its archive releases amount to a hidden history of free jazz and maverick rock that explodes the myth of Japanese conformity.

Brief history The label grew out of the record shop Modern Music, which opened in Tokyo in 1980. The first release was the 1985 Psychedelic Speed Freaks album by High Rise. By default the album title became the name of the label.

Statement of intent At the time there were a lot of interesting groups around who had no chance of being released by a major label, and alternative labels did not yet exist. So PSF was started out of a desire to capture some of these new psychedelic vibes on record. I only release what I like, and I hope that some of these sounds will appeal to the more discerning listener.

Other activities Running Tokyo's best underground record shop, Modern Music. Publishing our quarterly psychedelic, avant-garde underground magazine G-Mode. **Future plans** Upcoming releases include new studio recordings by Kan Mikami, Kazuki Tomokawa, Vajra, Musica Transonic, with Key Hano, and others still nebulous.

Choice cuts Motacharu Yoshizawa *Play Unlimited*; Kan Mikami *Joyu*; Masayuki Takayanagi *Call In*; Question, *Fushisuzuki Live*

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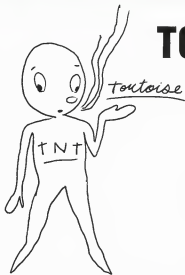
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Semi-legal, changing hands on a street corner near you, **mixtapes** are the elusive, rogue carriers of the HipHop virus. Peter Shapiro celebrates the culture of the cassette



-8% mixed medium 0%

"There's not a problem that I can't fix because I can do it in the mix." Indeed, "Last Night A DJ Saved My Life"

The transformative power of the mix has been the dominant guiding principle of popular music since the development of the Jamaican sound system and the ascendancy of disco. Whether it's the all-night hedonism of disco's perpetual groove monology or the cutting and chopping segues and edits of HipHop's mutant hybridisation, the perfect mix is where music's capacity for deliverance and redemption now resides. Even rock is starting to show the influences of its old enemies: the almost Tannoy releases of tension in a disco-house mix show up in post-rock (U2's "Grand Piano"), Tortoise's "Dye", while Oasis and Pavement, in their picking over of rock's canon, show a similar nothing-but-climaxes, soundtrack approach to music-making as that of HipHop producers. These mirror-images, two logics of turntable manipulation reach their apotheosis in the mixtape.

In New York, mixtapes are sold by true representatives of Reaganite/Thatcherite enterprise culture: street-level hustlers who set up shacks on prime corners with lots of pedestrian traffic, or if they're really ballsy, right outside record company offices. Most of these guys work longer hours than corporate lawyers, hawking their wares from morning till night in the dead of winter with only their Puffa jackets for comfort. My personal favourite sets up stall directly across from the Port Authority bus terminal. Appropriately, the stall is next door to a shop whose stock includes the finest collection of Kangols and pimp hats in the Western world, HipHop tapes and bootlegs of Larry Levan's Paradise Garage sets (not to mention Lover's Rock, salsa, regga and Latin Freestyle tapes), dodgy dubz of vintage Hong Kong chop sodas and videos of blockbuster movies that have just been cinematically released. It's a stocking policy that fits perfectly with the semi-legality of the mixtape.

Resolutely underground and self-distributed, mixtapes are the ideal carriers of the HipHop virus: the samples aren't cleared, and the hes, clicks and distortion of the cassette only add to the character of the cuts. Since HipHop mixtapes rarely have track listings, and circulate in an obfuscating culture where knowledge is transmitted only in code, they are the perfect expression of the ultimate transporter genre whose origins lie deep in the record crates of such legendary breakfast archivists as DJ Herc and Grandmaster Flash. However, mixtapes have become so important that many HipHop labels give DATs of new releases to important mixtape DJs long before the records hit the stores, to generate a buzz on the street. There is now even a Deadhead-like subculture of tape traders who specialise in arcane subdivisions, such as tapes of tracks that appeared on promotional advance copies, but not on the actual album.

The roots of the mixtape industry can be traced back to the release of *Death Mix*, a tape of Afrika Bambaataa playing a party at the James Monroe High School in the Bronx that was issued on Winley Records in 1983, apparently without Bam's consent (it has recently been reissued, along with Winley's Super Disco Brakes series, with even more questionable legality). Featuring MCs advertising Bambaataa's next party appearance over incredibly rough and primitive cutting and scratching by Jazzy Jay and Bam himself, *Death Mix* now sounds light-years away from the intricate breakfast chronography of Rob Swift's recent *Soulful Fruit mix*, or the turntable gymnastics of DJ Babu's *Comprehension*.

Consisting of a collection of Babu's scratch collages and his more abstract battle routines, *Comprehension* represents the more experimental end of mixtape construction in which the mix becomes a blur of suggested images and found sounds — the datacloud of postmodern theory. Babu scratches to punctuate rather than create on his commercially available *World*

Famous Beat Junkies Volume 1 mix, engineering a rapprochement between the dense science of turntablism and the more accessible practice of cutting and blending individual tracks into a seamless whole. A long way from such segued early 70s K-Tel compilation albums as *High Energy* or *Super Disco Rocket* (as well as their 90s parallel, the computer-blended dance mix), in the hands of a DJ like Babu, the mix becomes a new kind of narrative. As with the other aspects of HipHop culture — graffiti, rapping and B-boying — what counts in DJing is that it flows, no matter how skimming, exaggerated or lunatic. Much to the dismay of cultural commentators of a modernist bent, the mix is a new way of ordering life: with all the shout-outs, referencing and switch-flipping, the mix takes on the quality of a detestable cliché like "the fabric of life", and "songs" begin to make sense only as constituent parts in a stream of images and information.

HipHop mixtapes rarely "go anywhere": tapes like *World Famous Beat Junkie* or Rob Swift's *Pure Moods* maintain the same tempo all the way through. The lack of any peaks and valleys in mixtapes is emblematic of HipHop's origins as a music created solely out of the climates of songs (breakbeats). That said, however, my no doubt sacrilegious vote for the best mixtape ever goes to one that got a legit release, and consciously seeks to have a beginning, a middle and an end. Coldcut's contribution to the *Journeys By DJ* series. By referencing the history of cut 'n' paste music from Mkey Dread through Double Dee & Steinski and the Kas FM *Mastermix* records to their own "Beats And Pieces", Coldcut look far, and find, the perfect beat by managing to embody both schools of mixology in their contextualisation and magnification of the singular intensity of HipHop and its aftermath, the mixtape reaches its apotheosis. Mixtapes are available from that shifty looking geezer in the shellout on the corner.

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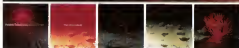
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tokyo drifter



Japanese trumpeter **Toshinori Kondo** has done well by playing the Kon-fusion card. He's worked Yakuza movies and high-level fusion, Improv and DJ summits. Words: Rob Young. Photography:

"Kon-fusion always my style," jokes the Japanese gentleman enthroned in a voluptuous sofa in the paneled reception room of a West London hotel. "Kon-fusion, yeah," he adds with a laugh: nailing home the pun on his name. Kondo the fusionist, waging Brain War on the smooth surfaces of modern governance and corporate media via tangled, homespun hornbeats. That, at least, is how he showed up on the radar for most of the 80s, during his tenure with his group IMA, who you could describe as a synthetic jazz-Mental improvising unit. But now is different, and those who remember him as he appeared in *The Wire* in 1987 — waxed crop, frowning to camera, cloaked in Issey Miyake — could be forgiven for thinking this new, long-haired version isn't Toshinori Kondo at all, but his wastrel prodigal brother returned from the fleshpots of the West.

But it is the real Kondo, and it seems the Brain War has ended along with the Cold. He's called a truce in order to parley with the fmer, lighter equipped foot soldiers of 90s DJ culture. In particular, a light skirmish with Tokyo turntablist DJ Krush is

documented on *Ki-Oku*. Recorded two years ago, and previously available on a Sony Japan import, the album has now been released in Europe by R&S. "When I was younger I had more energy," Kondo sighs, "but now I'm getting older, and somehow less energy — with the body weight. But I can enjoy it more — strange — if I play free improvised music these days, compared to when I was younger. I can enjoy more detail. Very simply you can play trumpet two or three ways: melodious way, or rhythmic way, or more noisy way. So for improvised music I used to play more rhythm and sound, and these days I try to play more melodic stuff. Especially to play with DJs — I can enjoy more timing, and also some melody line."

Back in improvised music's dark ages, Kondo chameleoned it like an Oriental Renaissance Man. He drifted from an early — and on the surface, unlikely — collaboration with black free jazz drummer Malrod Graves, to establishing bridgeheads between worlds as diffuse as Derek Bailey's Company Weeks and the New York Material/Laswell caucus. In the here and now, he's still capable of swinging like a pendulum,

from heavyweight splatter-Impro ("Last November I played with Peter Brotzmann, Hamid Drake and William Parker") to the slow-burning incense of his Krush collision. It's not Kondo's first brush with the decks: the later incarnation of IMA featured DJ Takada, who put him in touch with Krush.

Kondo and Krush spent two months in 1996 recording *Ki-Oku* (Memory), celebrating the musical synthesis by crunching unfamiliar words together in the track titles: "Toh-Sur" ("Transparent Sleep"), "Mu-Chu" ("Dream/Outer Space"), "Bu-Sek" ("Dancing Stone"). "I was always asking him to make slower groove," explains Kondo. "For me, any good DJ is like good drummer. Some jazz musicians say, 'We do not play with DJs because DJs are not musicians'; but if they have nice grooves on tracks, then it's very easy to play. If they even use chopsticks to make rhythm, then this track grooves."

Kondo now shuttles between his new home in Amsterdam and Tokyo, where despite having played solo concerts as a rapid response to the Kobe earthquake in 1995 (documented on the Japan-only CD *Kobe 17.01.95*), he claims to be seriously out of favour. "Oh, Japanese people hate Kondo," he remarks. "Kondo has no respect. I'm always kind of on the edge. I don't stay with any particular musical style, you know? I'm not a jazz musician. I'm always combining something." Surely that's not a problem, considering the mercurial turnover of ideas and fashions in the Japanese capital? "Oh yeah, it is a problem. Even now, Japanese interviewers, they ask me sometimes, 'So Kondo, you play jazz or you play rock, or what?' And I sometimes say, 'OK, I play

cyberjazz, or cyberpunk.' " So for them, my distance is sometimes very dizzy. I'm selling them always something new."

Like his contemporary Ryuichi Sakamoto, Kondo augments his musician's fees with jobbing film work. Three years ago he played a Yakuza in *Golizudon Tsumotochi*, and more recently he appeared in Sogo Ishi's movie *Angel Dust*. Does he get any more respect for his acting roles? "I think less respect. They confuse more about it. For example, if I go to some club or a bar, night time in Tokyo, even now some young chicks come up to me and say, 'Are you actor?' They don't know I play trumpet."

Chicks, Yakuza, experimental jet setting: it's all part of the effort of getting back into more public action following the years spent, in Kondo's own words, as a "music monk, behind big smoke," after the break up of IMA. With the possible exception of later releases like *Huron Morke* (1988) and *Brain War* (1991), IMA's half-dozen records have not withered well. But even the anemic 80s production can quite mask the ferocious energy of Kondo's playing on

records like *Metal Position*, *Taken* and *IMA*. "I actually kept [the group] for nine years," he comments, "and sometimes you lose a kind of tension. Also I had encouraged them to get out of Tokyo, Japan — to play everywhere. But the Japanese mentality, you know... They all wanted to stay in Tokyo, which I couldn't accept any more." There's the suspicion, too, that the winds of change had started blowing even faster than IMA's own tornado: the marriage broke up. "Privately, I wanted to be alone again. As a musician, sometimes you really have to get out of the society or the family — you just want to hide yourself. I checked my musical direction, and learnt how to play bumpet again. I would love to work more, but I have no manager... If you join management systems, you aren't so free any more."

For now, Kondo has embarked on that nomadic drive favoured by growing numbers of his generation, for whom the bone structure of their careers refuses to calcify. Like Miles and Jon Hassell before him, he's following the electric horn's pull towards the verdant landscapes and suppurating rainforests of sampledelic HipHop and avant fusion. Last year he participated in Paul Schütze's *Phantom City* (as documented on the *Shiver Acol* live album); while in the immediate future, he's gearing up for a studio project with Italian Laswell-disciple Eraldo Bernocchi for the Sub Rosa label, and recording the soundtrack to a German TV series on Virtual Reality presented by William Gibson — a favourite writer. "Now, there's almost no centre for music," he theorises. "Any kind of new music happens from the

his way into Issey Miyake suits, Nick Strangelove

margins. Now is a very interesting period for music, not only musically, but politically, economically... Now is time for big change. I think music is also trying to find new directions; now is big chaos just trying. At the beginning of this century, some black musicians came out from Mississippi Delta; so then they just start playing music, and it became music for this century. When we see what's happened this century, from jazz to rock, even punk and pop music, it's all same instrumentalizations that has made this century's music. Next century, maybe instrumentation will be different. Come ten years there will still be chaos. If you think music is a kind of fashion, then computer music is much stronger than music. But I don't think music is a fashion. Music is more a kind of plate to carry the vibration — musical carrier to carry some invisible stuff."

Perhaps by way of illustrating the last point, Kondo describes the concept he has for his next group. "Yeah, I have one idea," he deadpans. "I want to play with musicians who are all naked." Ki-Oku is out now on R55 (through Vnu)



"Follow the dancing girl, go to a quiet place here in the weary world, somewhere between time and space/We shall be free" — Terry Callier, "Dancing Girl" (1974)

For 30 years Terry Callier has been chasing the spectral sound — that moment when the floodgates of the unconscious part and inspiration flows unchecked. Following his debut album *New Folk Sound* in 1968, he went on to create a compact but unique body of work incorporating experimental elements of jazz, soul and R&B that stretched the idea of a new folk sound way beyond its original definition.

Then in 1983, after recording the single "I Don't Want To See Myself Without You", he disappeared. He gave up music to move back to his mother's home in Chicago, where he took computer programming courses at the Control Data Institute and concentrated on bringing up his daughter. "I had no idea that anyone was still appreciating the music I was fortunate enough to be a part of in the early 70s," explains Callier today. "I'd been listening to and keeping up with what was happening in the business, more or less, but I didn't envision myself having a part in it."

Callier had been out of circulation for eight years when, out of the blue, he received a phone call from Eddie Piller, head of London's Acid Jazz label. "When Eddie first contacted me I was a little sceptical," shrugs Callier. "He related that 'I Don't Want To See Myself Without You' was being played in the clubs and getting a great reaction. He wanted to re-release the material as quickly as possible. We made the necessary arrangements and when the 12" was released in the UK and Europe it created a stir."

Callier came to Britain to promote the single with a short tour which peaked in an emotional performance at London's Jazz Cafe in 1995. His full recuperation culminates with the release of the album *Timepiece on Talkin' Loud*, containing his first new material in 15 years. This time, he says, he's back for good.

Terry Callier grew up on Chicago's Near North Side, a beautiful area near Lake Michigan within walking distance of the beach where he and his brother wasted many a hazy afternoon. His memories of childhood are tied up with the music and musicians that surrounded him. "The neighbourhood was home to Jerry Butler, Curtis Mayfield, Major Lance and Ramsey Lewis," reminisces Callier, "and there were many other talented people who, for one reason or another, never received or wanted the attention they deserved. In particular there was a young man in high school called Joe Breckenridge who performed with a group called The Cascades. They used only original material and when I formed my first duo-wave group in seventh grade, he was the main inspiration. All of these people were just 'folks', although in a short time they

had become nationally and internationally known.

"There was music all around, in the neighbourhood and at home. There were record shops that sold all the latest R&B, pop and gospel recordings. I can still remember the feel, look and smell of those places. Some were very small — less than eight feet by ten feet — but you could stand and listen, buy what you wanted, and every now and then, you could run into the people who had made the recordings. Singers, musicians, artist managers and hangers-on would all frequent the shops to hang out and be seen."

In addition, Callier's mother boasted a fairly comprehensive record collection. So from an early age he immersed himself in the big band sounds of Duke Ellington and

Court Baile, vocalists like Billie Holiday and Rhy Charles, the frenetic instrumentals of Louis Jordan and The Tympany Five, and the deep electric blues of Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf. "My mom, God rest her, wanted me to be a lawyer," he laughs, "but from about ten years old I wanted to be in music."

His chance came soon enough. "I signed with Chess before I graduated from high school and I had done some gigs with a group called The Whippoorwills. The first song I recorded that was actually released was 'Look At Me Now'. We put down three or four tracks — the arranger was Charles Stepney and the producer was Esmond Edwards. This must have been around 1962-63."

However, it wasn't until the recording in 1965 of *New Folk Sound* (eventually released on the Prestige label in 68) that Callier really began to chase his muse in earnest. He began to explore how to effectively locate the deep soul boom of his voice in variously textured sound spaces. Consisting mostly of standards ("Cotton Eyed Joe", "Oh Dear, What Can The Matter Be"), the album's remarkable skewed folk took in subtle shades of funk and soul shouts. It is also notable for its use of two basses. "I used two bass players because I heard a John Coltrane record on which he had used the same set-up."

Callier, possibly referring to Oris, also recorded in 1965, on which second bassist Donald Garrett (of The Sea Ensemble, and partner of Zsuzsanna Kall Farkas) played alongside Jimmy Garrison; or Ascension, which featured Garrison and Art Davis's stellar doubling-up. Coltrane had already tried using two drummers on *Meditations*, and when jazz critic Nat Hentoff asked why he used two bassists, Coltrane had replied, "I want more of the sense of the expansion of time. I want the time to be more plastic."

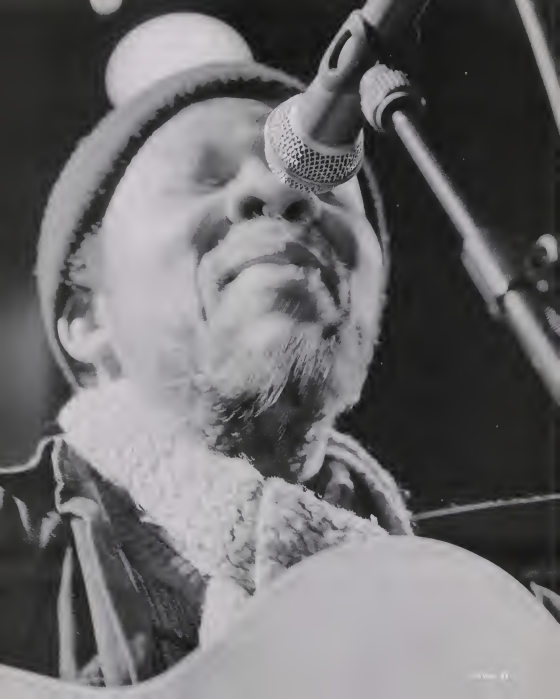
Callier used the same timewarp strategy to create a sound that expands in all directions, an organic to-and-fro which makes the music throb with life. This was the beginning of Callier's obsession with time, manifest in his circular guitar picking, his mantric way of chewing on a phrase,



PHOTO: JEFFREY MAYER

RAISING LAZARUS

In the 1960s **Terry Callier** defined a new folk sound enriched by an encounter with John Coltrane. Despite recording a trilogy of jazz/folk/soul classics in the 1970s, he then disappeared, until the Acid Jazz label disinterred one of his great lost songs. Words: David Keenan



and the first rumblings of his lyrical idea of the muse. A mind that "no longer experiences itself subjectively" (as Bill Hicks put it) enters a realm outside of space and time, where it opens up to pure inspiration, divine or otherwise. In this he was on a similar wavelength to late-period Coltrane, who was after escaping time, chasing the Om hum of the universe. As Callier sees it, "With *A Love Supreme*, Coltrane took the form to a new level — music was not only a means to expression but a pathway to devotion, a means of rendering the highest praise."

Callier saw Coltrane's quartet with Garrison, McCoy Tyner and Elvin Jones in 1964, an experience which "deserves a book in itself," as he puts it. "I went to a club in Chicago called McKie's Disk Jockey Lounge," he continues, "it was right at the train stop on 63rd and Cottage Grove. I was excited and got there early. I heard some hammering as I approached the door and wondered what was going on. I walked in and Elvin Jones was nailing his drum kit to the floor of the stage. That was something I'd never seen before. When the quartet began playing, I was afraid for them because I wasn't sure what would happen to human beings playing with that much intensity, and I was afraid for myself because I didn't know what would happen to me if I continued to listen. I made myself sit there until I became comfortable with what they were doing, until I could hear and see the patterns and relate to a new kind of beauty." For Callier, this was the moment when nothing else made sense. Experiencing the transonic force of four musicians at the peak of their collective powers almost destroyed him. "The next day, I started looking for a day job. I knew I was nowhere near as into my music as they were into theirs — I didn't expect to be like them in terms of technique, but I felt that if I wasn't as committed to my method of presentation as they were to theirs, I might as well do something else until such time as I could be as intense in my own way."

Callier did indeed stop playing in public. For almost a year he stayed at home, practicing, writing and listening. When he stepped out again he was a changed man. He was still presenting a basically straight folk set, but he was also playing more of his own songs. The music was cast in a looser, darker style, marked with a heavy dissonant air borne of his Coltrane encounter.

After recording *New Folk Sound*, Callier played Chicago's clubs and coffee houses. Aural tale 1969 when he received the invitation to join Jerry Butler's legendary Songwriters' Workshop. "I became a staff writer in 1970," remembers Callier. "The writers were paid a weekly salary and all we had to do was show up at Jerry's studio, which was at 14th and Michigan, and write. There was no quota set for us, in fact I was the slowest writer there. I teamed up with Larry Wade at the time and in 1972 we wrote 'The Love We Had Stays On My Mind' for a group called The Delis. That was the most successful tune I've ever written, in terms of sales."

While The Delis were in the studio recording their *Freedom Means Aloud*, producer Charles Stepney, who had arranged Callier's first recordings for Chess a decade earlier, asked him if he'd be interested in recording some of his own songs. He immediately set to work on the 1973 Chess/Cadet album *Occasional Ram*. The record captured the sound he'd been working towards since that encounter with Coltrane's music. His voice is sturdy and heavily exhaled, blackly forlorn yet still standing, lightly bolstered by minimal Hammond organ and brush work. Furthermore, songs like "Ordinary Joe" and "Do You Finally Need A Friend," both beautifully executed folk/jazz hybrids, hint at the levitational peaks of his next LP, *What Color Is Love?*

Released in 1974, *What Color Is Love?* is Callier's masterpiece, the perfect blending of his ringing folk guitar, the midnight soul of his mumbled scat-singing and

his use of illusory jazz space. "A few of the tracks were done live in the Chess studios," explains Callier, referring to "You Don't Care," "Ho Tang Mee A Song" and "Just As Long As We're In Love," with 25-30 musicians in the studio and Charles Stepney alternately conducting and playing piano. What a feeling that way I still think that's the way to record."

The centerpiece of *What Color Is Love* is the epic "Dancing Girl." Over nine minutes long, it's a hallucinatory voyage into the artist's unconscious, a yearning to give up the subjective experience of self, to be taken up and swept away by his muse — to call down divine inspiration. Like Bob Dylan's "Mr. Tambourine Man," Callier follows the Dancing Girl to a place "with all memory and fate, given death beneath the waves"; as Callier puts it, "somewhere between time and space/Cast your dancing soul." The song is about both escape from earthly existence and the writing process itself. It's also an investigation into the sound of word-clusters, themes with which both Callier

and Dylan share a fascination. "All singer-songwriters, whether they admit it or not were influenced by Bob Dylan, at least the ones who came of age between 1965 or so and 1975," he says. "He expanded the vocabulary, and after him the only limits on us were our own imaginations — everything could be set to music."

Callier's final Cadet album, *I Just Can't Help Myself* (1975), firmly established him in a genre of one. "I'm a singer-songwriter," he stresses. "Soul has definitely influenced some of what I do. But so has jazz, folk and R&B. As far as I'm concerned, any artist who tries to put some of her or himself into what they do is a soul singer. Their genre is mainly defined as a black or Afro-American art form but that's hardly what it's about — investigating something with meaning is above and beyond meaningless racial definitions." One of the album's highlights is "Can't Catch The Train," Callier's tribute to the man who laid it out that night at McKie's Disk Jockey Lounge. "When he started playing," sings Callier ecstatically, "think about what he's saying! — sounds just like he's prayin'."

After Cadet, Callier recorded two albums for Elektra in the late '70s: *Fire On Ice* (1978) and 1979's *Turn You To Love*, which included a reworking of "Ordinary Joe." Not that anyone noticed. Callier's star was in descent: record sales were negligible and he became a mysterious and, for the most part, forgotten performer. His Cadet albums and early singles began to change hands for jawdropping amounts among collectors, but for everyone else, Callier simply faded from view. Finally, in 1983, he blew what was left of his savings on recording one last sad refrain. With a group of friends he recorded "I Don't Want To See Myself (Without You)" and then vanished. Until the phone call from Acid Jazz almost a decade later.

“When I saw John Coltrane’s quartet I was afraid. I wasn’t sure what would happen to human beings playing with that much intensity”

The new album *Timepiece* finds Callier knee-deep in his past obsessions. Pharoah Sanders puts in an appearance — Callier met him around the time of "The Creator Has A Masterplan" — while tracks such as "Love Scene From Spartacus"

showcase his darkly psychedelic Nick Drake-style acoustic guitar. His voice has never sounded better. *Timepiece* sees Callier gaze back over his life, accepting his younger self and coming to terms with what time has wrought. In "Lazarus Man," the album's stand-out track, the narrator meets a young man who, like Dylan's Angel in "Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues," "just blew in from the coast." "I can't quite remember last time / was on shore/Could've been 12 years, might have been more," sings Callier. While Dylan still longs for time out of mind, Terry Callier has finally made his peace with time and found his space. "I think peace is better than war. Love is better than hate, and that there is one Creator in us all," he says. "If a song's words don't carry any weight or meaning on their own, there's no message that can be read into them." *Timepiece* is out now on Tallin/Loud (through PolyGram).

Those stabbing violins from Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) — everyone knows them, no one can vocally imitate them, numerous films mimic them. Far more than a residual icon of popular culture, Bernard Herrmann's simple yet sickeningly effective musical device contains one of the most profound treatise on the production of music this century. Here's why.

Hallowed for its mystical properties, the violin's design and purpose have more sinister origins. Take a living tree, chop it down and hack it apart, re-shape it in the form of a limbless female torso, gouge a vaginal hole to create an evanescent resonating chamber, take the hair of a horse's tail and fashion a tense bow, gut a cat and stretch its innards into thin strings, add some detailing to resemble an ornate piece of domestic furniture. Then scrape the horse's fur across the dead cat's remains and generate a howling screech. But to elevate your destructive act to a creative one, you must obey a harmonic code, and practise for years until you can manage pitch controlled melody. As a frail, gorgeous, feminine tone is emitted from this maxed-out instrument, you will be hailed as a producer of music art, beauty and truth. Viewed this way, the violin is a perfect symbol of the desperate measures taken by European High Art since the Enlightenment to violently tame nature in order to produce a beauty predicated on death, destruction and decay.

How fitting, then, that Herrmann — for his *Psycho* score — configures the specious glory of the violin as a modernist wall of clashing frequencies to accompany the image of a naked woman being stabbed repeatedly in the shower by a transvestite who has mummified his murdered mother. Once again, Herrmann's score uses music as but one vocabulary that must negotiate a tenuous relationship with sound and noise. Despite its hysterical and excessive appearance, the score to *Psycho* is no mere cancanure of Otherness: it musically simulates the collapse of meaning which propels its character psychoses, using the venerated violin as a site of musical significance. In the process it generates noise from an instrument designed specifically to transcend noise.

Throughout *Psycho*, Herrmann orchestrates chaos, conducts adrenaline, tempers aggression and builds tension. When Marion (Janet Leigh) drives towards her doom through a downpour of Gothic rain, the windscreen wipers cut the seeping shower like manual batons in time with the main theme (forecasting the means by which she will die). When Norman (Anthony Perkins) starts to lose his grip on things while casually chatting with Marion, the score performs a delicate unflinching of modulating atonal motifs which symbolise Norman's hazed and phased thought processes. Higher frequencies on the violins mark his clearing of his head, lower drones by the cellos echo the rotting, ground swell of his mother's hold on his mental faculty. Running to around 17 minutes, and subtitled "A Narrative For Orchestra" on the official stereo recording released by Decca in the early '70s, there is not a gratuitous, vague, ill-prompted nor ornamental note in the whole score. As a composer, Herrmann is never impressionist, lyrical or

The Shining

even expressionist — he remains a passionate structuralist whose sense of musical logic and psychoacoustics marks him as the most modern and cinematic of film scorers.

Whether or not other composers and directors are cerebrally fixed on his achievements does not dilute the essential quality of Herrmann's work, which has propelled a network of spindly shards and knots through numerous 'psyche' movies since. A knowing revision of Herrmann's contribution to musical psychosis is found in the selection of music for Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980) — in particular, the excerpts from Krzysztof Penderecki's *Polyamorphia* (1961) and *De Natura Sonoris* (1966).

More so than the intricate transpositions of insect harmonics and frequencies that give Bela Bartok's later work its feral, corpulent richness, Penderecki's compositions celebrate the abject violence of nature. For at least three centuries, composers have used the

As with Herrmann's charting of the surges in Norman's emotional instability, Penderecki's passages function as a soundtrack to the core synaptic overloads which induce psychosis, creating a hyper-material effect of scoring neural and metabolic movement instead of coding harmony to match known social norms and devotions.

In an ironic but committed manner, Kubrick is sourcing the High Art realm of serious composition to shape the aural world of *The Shining*. Furthermore, William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1971) contains a canny selection of excerpts from Penderecki, Anton Webern and George Crumb to create a paranormal contra-social domain for its tale of demonic possession.

The atonality fraternity of *Psycho*, *The Exorcist* and *The Shining* is so much more than the odd chromatic progression to signify the absence of melodious accord. They are astute muskalisations of ECG read-outs, charting the core impulses of moments well beyond the moral conventions of character motivation

young woman's body discovered in a farm ditch, then follows a presumed narrative of her last few weeks based on casual interviews with those whose paths she crossed in the lead up to her undramatic death.

This means that five minutes into the film you already know its outcome: this woman will die. As the story unfolds, you're brought into close proximity with the transient flow of life which governed both the young woman's philosophy and the conditions under which she existed. The accompanying music marks her actions and reactions with a haunting, stinging quality. A strange drafting of pathos and seeping of affection fatally plants the young woman as a ghost: a fading being whose erasure is proportionately framed by people's wavering feelings towards her, and her response to their lack or surplus of affection. Emotional confusion reigns, as the music's atonality and arch serial escalations stall the onrager from committing to her character one way or the other. Soliciting neither a

cat scratch fever

In the latest reel of his **secret history of film music**, Philip Brophy reveals how the sinister origins of classical instruments resurface in horror's compact with the avant garde

orchestra's mass and size to create intimidating landscapes, portraits, wars and journeys that evoke the scale of nature's destructive, creative and rejuvenating powers. But Penderecki's archly modernist post-war deconstruction of harmonic future encodes the sonic detailing of the destruction of the orchestra itself — overtly signified by the aggressive scraping of the string section. Penderecki works beyond abstraction to a pure material essence as he forces the musicians to rip open violin's polished veneer and expose the shivering soul trapped in its necrophilic casing. His infamous *Symphony For The Victims Of Hiroshima* (1960) is a desolate, deafening, abstract narrative, which many people learn to an atomic bomb blast even before they learn the title of the work.

As Jack Torrance (Jack Nicholson) creeps up the stairs swinging a baseball bat at his wife in *The Shining*, Penderecki's strings slice the air like deadly bursts of steam expelled through Jack's flaring nostrils. Blowhere, during those unsettling moments when Jack is slowly becoming possessed by the hotel's psychotic ghost, the orchestra rumbles like a needle left in a Deutsche Grammophon disc, while a mid earth tremor vibrates the diamond stylus. Most importantly, *The Shining* eschews cues in favour of asynchronous passages which extemporise the narrative and sculpt a dramatic ambience wherein a character's psychosis becomes an aura which taints, tinges and terrifies all other existence in its space



A film which captures the mystery of apparently 'unmotivated action' — so confusing to those steeped in literary convention and classical storytelling forms — is Agnès Varda's *Vagabonde* (1985). The score by Joanna Brudnowicz could superficially be described as Webernesque in its austere and skeletal interlocking of chamber instruments climbing over each other in serialist fashion. However, that does not accurately qualify its precise contribution to the film.

The film's unnamed lead character is a young woman (Sandrine Bonnaire) hitching rides around southern France, living in fields, shacking up with whoever she meets, stealing food when the moment presents itself. Mostly using a cast of local non-actors, the film's narrative is appropriately transient: it opens with the

stream of emma: not a fissure of existentialism, Vagabonde creates a vacuum within which harmony is posited as a device deemed entirely incapable of coding the complexity of people's shifting emotional states. One of the other very few films which works its atonal score along these lines is Manoel De Oliveira's rich but often near-impenetrable *The Convent* (1992), which uses uninterrupted movements from one of Stravinsky's more austere works to perplexing yet magical effect.

Perhaps this is why music cues are so neurotically Romantic in their cartoonish reduction of human traits when audiences cannot identify with onscreen characters, they have to delve into themselves to question why. And most people are happy to pretend they can relate to others, even as their social reality argues otherwise.

Perceived in this somewhat harsh modern light, cinematic atonality — whether serialist, abstract or hyper-material — can traumatise the listener deeply when it is attached to the representation of human activity and discourse. For we hold the Other at a safe distance, desperately believing we are not Other ourselves. While the excessive rendering of psychotic and aberrant personalities in films like *Psycho*, *The Exorcist* and *The Shining* makes them acceptable, films like *Vagabonde* and *The Convent* make clear just how little psychological territory has been covered in the musical characterisation of film scores. ...



the tone zone

In Berlin's Kreuzberg district, the Chain Reaction label sits at the centre of a hive of activity that is redefining the sound of electronic music. Kodwo Eshun meets the manufacturers behind the machines: **Porter Ricks, Vainqueur, Various Artists, Monolake and Substance.** Photography: Frank Bauer

Every CD released by Berlin's Chain Reaction label arrives in an identical silver metal case. Versically stamped in relief, the label's logo lowers above minimal track info printed on a square of mottled grey. Way down at the bottom, in minuscule type, is the artist's name. Clarity provokes mystery. You scan the sleeve and the CD, and your mind supplies the missing confusion. Chain Reaction's aesthetic raises label runner Mark Ernestus's shyness and elusiveness to the third power. With anonymity comes freedom.

But the drawbacks to this anonymity are audible: isolation, the sense of being dwarfed by logo. Worst of all, the world isn't hearing the amazing music that's been emerging from Berlin since 1995. All the breakthroughs the label has made into a tantalizing, elusive, endlessly compelling strain of electronic music by artists such as Vanqueir, Various Artists, Mondlake, Substance and Porter Ricks, risk going unnoticed. Yet like the music of its host organism, the Basic Channel label (see *The Wire* 150), Chain Reaction's releases seep slowly through the brakes media silence imposes on breaks, erode resistance and work their way into the public consciousness.

No one's quite sure whether Chain Reaction music is House or Techno or dub. Actively exploring its own sound logic has the side effect of derealising the belief structures which coagulate around these old formats. New sounds create new emotional spectrums, exerting a forcefield which dissolves the solidity of scenes, drawing you away from clubland, back to the living room and the headphones, then generating new dancefloors with a characteristic mix of indifference and antagonism towards older paradigms.

Chain Reaction's image is anonymous and the music is characteristically mystifying. Nothing breaks this confusion. No pictures or interviews act as future shock absorbers; the full force of their inexplicable sounds falls around your ears. The listener wanders through an acoustic space.

Chain Reaction operates from a third floor office in the Kreuzberg district of Berlin. The groundfloor is occupied by Hard Wax, the specialist shop for Chicago, Detroit and UK imports that became the nerve centre of the city's nascent Techno scene in the early 90s. Marusha, Westbam, DJ Hell, Paul Van Dyk — crossover DJs, who wouldn't come within spring distance of each other now — would all crowd into the shop to hear new 12"s by Underground Resistance (UR) or Blake Baxter. Around its walls, UR communiques, and faxes from Carl Craig's Retroactive label, form a glazed wallpaper. Out of Hard Wax, and the Detroit-Berlin Techno axis documented on the series of *Tresor* albums, emerged Basic Channel, the highly influential label/producer team run by Hard Wax's Mark Ernestus and Moritz von Oswald, aka Maurizio. When Techno had fossilised around specific sound machines, sounds and approaches, Basic Channel offered the way out of the miasma, and Chain Reaction was set up for its proteges to continue the work of dissolving Techno's fixity, bypassing the familiar formats, and generating the sweet confusion of the new.

Meanwhile, still acting as both trading post and meeting place, the Hard Wax shop has become a post-Techno gateway, opening out into dub, electroacoustics and two-step Jungle, as well as the inspired Techno of former UR member Jeff Mills. In fact, a self-sufficient ecology has developed in its building, linking the shopfloor to Chain Reaction and its satellite labels. Ernestus and von Oswald's reggae-inflected Rhythm & Sound and Bural Mix, Imbalance, established by von Oswald to release more abstract electroacoustic works, and now run by Mondlake's Robert Henke, Drin, run by Sasha Brauer and Various Artists' Thorsten Profrock. The building also houses the dubplate and mastering room, installed by Basic Channel so they could cut vinyl to Detroit standards. All these activities are independently interlinked, autonomous but related, detachable but connected.

Opposite page: the listening "booths" at the Hard Wax shop. Below: Porter Ricks and the Hard Wax customer's charter



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Rene Lino aka Valaqueer

Porter Ricks' Andy Melweg used to run the mastering room, but he and PR partner Thomas Koner have since spun off Chan Reaction's ties to spin Achim Szepanski's Force Inc. and Mike Plateaux labels. Yet, as its flagship unit, they're still its best known artists. Indeed, back in 1995, when Chan Reaction 12's first started arriving in the UK, the label and duo seemed synonymous, as welded together as Aphex Twin and Warp or Jeff Mills and Aus. Every few weeks, Hard Wax prints a tipsheet and next to Porter Ricks would be the fervent review "The group with the sovereign sound! A must!"

Pronouncing Porter Ricks is only the first pleasure of their three-year project. Their name is an adventure of the mouth: "Port" wrinkles open the lips, turns the tongue into a drawbridge across which the "Ricks" trundles like the wheels of an unknown trolley.

Thomas Koner cackles delightedly at this, extracting more humour from your words than he intended. His laughter doesn't build, it goes from nought to ten straight away and when he laughs, which is often, his mouth splits his face until the edges nearly meet his eyes. Black eyeliner ringed pupils stare straight at you with a disconcerting mixture of the measured and the manic. His animated presence seems completely at variance with the frozen soundscapes of the solo projects he currently runs alongside Porter Ricks.

Even in the climate-controlled foyer of the Forum, a former communist showpiece hotel situated in the bleak expanse of East Berlin's Alexanderplatz, the bracing January air forces everyone to keep their coats on. Andy Melweg's white hair shoots out from his head with a startled force, he moves instantly into h-intensity thought mode, talking about his twin loves of baroque music and architecture and polyrhythmic phase patterns, building bridges between the two obsessions in the urgent sotto voce of a man who can't bear to be bored for an instant.

The origin of the duo's project name turns out to be far more down to earth: Porter Ricks was the zipper in the 70s dolphin movie *Flipper*. "A friend asks us how we work together," Melweg explains. "Well, in the background of the film is a scene where Porter Ricks tracks signal tones in the water to call Flipper, and Thomas said, 'Yes, that's the same procedure. Andy makes synth tones and I filter the sounds and design the sounds with my system.'"

"In some cuts," Thomas continues, "there was Porter Ricks just looking for Flipper. He was in some remote bay and had this underwater gear, and so he was just sending synthesizer sounds, synthetic sounds into the water. And nothing happened. This was his main job in this film. It was very cheap kind of garbage, like a honking horn [he quacks happily several times], but... no result. I thought, this is what music making is about: you make strange noises into the biggest space you could imagine, which is this human culture or the sea... and nothing happens. He was such a good man. He was really very honest and clear, and at the end of the film there was his name — Porter Ricks. After that, it was so clear what to do."

Each Porter Ricks single is a ship that pulls into a port and docks there for its duration. With Porter Ricks, you imagine unknown engines, overhead monorails, deep sea submarines, fantasies of turning into a big ship, its prow cutting through the waves. From The Beatles' "Yellow Submarine" to Bob James' "Nautibus" to Arto's "Moon Safari", unexplored sonic worlds compel the producer to invent an ark. From its portables you see the world.

Singles like "Port Of Transition"/"Port Of Call" and "Port Of Nuba"/"Nautical Nuba" are set between land and sea, with sounds travelling across water in a harbour acoustic. "We have in our studio a neon illuminated globe and we always had the water parts to the front," says Koner. "Therefore when you do a mix, you look to the right and see Port Gentil, for example. Just look in your atlas, it exists."

Their third release, "Nautical Dub (Total Mix)"/"Port Gentil" is where the duo realised that sovereign sound promised in Hard Wax's tipsheet. Recorded in April 1995 and released in January 1996, Melweg and Koner produced a shrouded, baffled, fogged electronic music that leaves you lost and unsure of what you're hearing. "For us the sound, colour and timbre are really part of the process," explains Koner. "It's really a developing piece. With the 'Nautical Dub', a lot of things have been done with the bass drum so the whole bass pulsation is kind of pitch-transposed and delayed, and this makes it really organic. This is attractive for us: it has a special organic feeling, it's kind of homogenous."

Every PR track is a live mix. "The first take is a kind of try out, the second take is then the first take," Koner continues. "The mixing is for me the ultimate approach to

musical creation. When I'm starting to mix I'm so totally clear, I would not even speak of concentration, because there is no topic of concentration. It's just that I'm there in this sound."

Melweg and Koner met while working as sound engineers at the Rozar post-production studio in Dortmund. Back then, their approaches were drastically opposed. Koner was "totally on a zero point, zero Kelvin" while Melweg was "totally hypercomplex". In the 70s, such a duo would have been stranded between the worlds of jazz and classical music. Chan Reaction was a window into "the open system of whole dancefloor culture." But now there is a divergence between the duo and the label. Koner elaborates: "We had so much inspiration, so much love and enthusiasm in our work, but Chan Reaction said, 'Ooh, it's too much, too much, too fast and so what, wait and...'. Of course, for a time we wait. But then you ask yourself, 'Why? Why shall I wait?' And there was no answer for us, so we were forced to look for other things, totally forced. There was no chance to release music. We had no space to unfold our capacity."

Their final Chan Reaction release was the label's first CD, *Bioinertics*, which fused 12" tracks and remixes into a seamless whole. Post-Chan Reaction, the submarine syntharmonies of "Redundance 5" from their double pack 12" released on Force Inc. was a revelation. Koner points to the sleeve of the duo's self-titled 1997 CD released by Force Inc.'s sister label, Mike Plateaux. With its "polyphonic and multicolour" photon

streaks, it couldn't be more distinct from Chan Reaction's hard-edged design minimalism. "I understand their policy," explains Koner, "the idea of the company as a kind of corporate identity, which of course must follow certain forms of appearance in public. But we must say we are not interested in corporate identity at all."

Melweg adds quietly, "It's pure dogmatism."

"The whole Achim Szepanski enterprise is much more conducive for us," resumes Koner, before commenting on Chan Reaction's metal CD packaging, which often damages the discs it's designed to protect. "We were never involved in the slightest discussion about its design. I would never agree to design a box which kills my CD. This box is actively destroying CDs."

He taps the inner casing. "I don't think this is an active aggression against people who buy CDs, but it's a bit odd. I'm not happy with it."

On "Nautical Nuba", overlapping, clicking sounds unbalance your hearing, which Melweg describes as "an African dance with spears clicking". Its disarming patterns — loops phasing in and out of time — defeat your ears' attempts to supply the missing beat. Melweg's fascination with polyrhythms dates back to *Asynic Sense*, the 1993 CD released by Robert Henke's Imbalance label. *Asynic Sense* electrifies polyrhythms or rhythmatises frequencies either way, its inharmonic clicking patterns constrict and deceive, pulling focus as you click into pattern recognition mode.

"The perception of moving is the shifting of perspective," Melweg explains. These phase patterns are one aspect of the larger co-exclusionary field of the tracks on *Bioinertics*. "When you shift your head, you shift rhythmic structure over the metronome. When the body is moving, it's a multiple rhythm, a polyrhythmism. The roots of dance are moving patterns from animals in the Stone Age, people observed the animal patterns. For Thomas and me, dance is a procedure between natural moving forms of animals and humans."

On an evening after the Hard Wax shop has closed, I talk with Rene Lowe, aka Vanquair. January is a busy time for the Hard Wax staff, as new deliveries arrive throughout the day. One of the first of the Hard Wax inner circle, Lowe joined back in



the early 90s, selling tracks alongside Ernestus and von Oswald when the shop was just a ground-floor room a fifth of its current size, snarled in Reichenberger Strasse, a kilometre from its present location.

"When I started DJing in 1990 Hard Wax was paradise for me, everything was there," recalls Lowe, who grew up in the communist German Democratic Republic. From 1992-95, Lowe DJed at the Waschhaus, a former washing machine factory in Potsdam, a Windsor-like Kasar town just west of the Wall that used to him in West Berlin. He met Ernestus and von Oswald when they played live at the Waschhaus in 1993. Vaniqueur's debut 12" "Lycit" — the second release on von Oswald's M label — would become Basic Channel's club anthem.

Today, that era seems long ago. Like his friends, Peter Kuschneret aka Substance (with whom he collaborated as Soon on a Chain Reaction 12") and Thorsten Proffrock aka Various Artists, Lowe talks of Techno in the past tense. "You work in the store and every day you hear stuff with these functional sounds, 909, 808 stuff," he laments, "every day, every year, nothing changes anymore. Then you realise Techno definitely is not anymore. It's not really possible to change the sound of Techno. It's now 1998 and it's still like it was 96. So it was very important for us to do something which is not normal Techno."

Three years on, Chain Reaction continues to receive only very grudging feedback

from other German Techno DJs. Lowe remarks: "It's strange, but we get more response from people more into industrial or dub than from the Techno or House scene. But we don't have a problem with that anymore."

Lowe is preoccupied, burdened by his East German past. "When the Wall was opened, I got more and more into music because I could buy the records now. Before you couldn't buy anything. It was a very hard time for me because I was training for stuff that doesn't exist anymore in the West. In the East you never thought that you could lose your job, everything was planned for you."

After the Wall finally came down Mark Ernestus helped him to relocate in post-unionification Berlin. In the short-lived euphoria before the economic reality of paying for reunification kicked in, Techno flourished. In 1991-92 Detroit producers like Eddie Fashini's Fowlies were regular visitors to the city. It was Fowlies who taught Lowe how to set up a studio. Once it was up and running, Lowe decided to name his recording project Vaniqueur, "because it is French for winner."

Proseidly because of the frustrations of post-Wall life, Vaniqueur's music is effortless, gliding, automotive. Lowe synthesizes soda siphon sounds from his Sequential machines. Everything is aerated. Jets of silver water spray from his sensorium, wash your brain. All the struggle, obstruction and blockage have been sluiced away in a coloric irrigation that leaves you as buoyant as light itself. "I have to fight with my own personal problems to do the music," Lowe attests. "Last year I had to do civil duty [the pacifist's alternative to obligatory national service in Germany] and that blew me totally out of the business. It was always like a fight to do another track. To work in the studio was like to be in a place without any trouble, where you just could do what you like. Music is something you can control a bit more than other things. Most of the tracks are just like a loop, and this is the perfect loop which can run for hours."

For Lowe, the impact of unsynopacted rhythmic machine momentum came as a revelation. He and Thorsten Proffrock both talk about removing the h-bats and the claps, thereby generating pulsations which avoid both ambience and beat. Sequential movement pulses between these two kinds of rhythmism. You feel like a car or a passenger on an endless train ride. Sequences open corridors through your perception, iterating motifs, refracted mirrors.

"I did the whole CD with very small equipment," recalls Lowe, referring to his 1997 Chain Reaction CD *Elevators*. "When I did the first 'Elevation' 12" in May 95, I had some normal drum sounds from an old sampling drum machine, a Sequential Sub 440, and then I realised the sequence is the thing of the track. Forget all drums. That was really important for me, because I never did before such an Ambient track. The first 'Elevation' was very emotional. I just did it in three hours. I got completely carried away. I start with some drum patterns, played some sounds and then freaked out because the sound was really powerful, without any other percussive things, just the sound. Afterwards I realised more and more that what I really like, you know, to just let the sounds run."

"For me," Lowe laments, "it's a bit like flying through the mountains or something. I really like northern territories like Norway. I really like this kind of nature, rough but beautiful, a little bit cold, but in the evening really clear."

Though he's describing his own process and result, Lowe has touched on the essence of Chain Reaction. By regulating and then reducing rhythm to sequences, to clicks, Chain Reaction producers can alter the metronome, as PR's Andy Millweg says, nudge it, overlay it. Massive amounts of acoustic space are freed up. The CR producers open up the horizontal dimension of timbre and tone colour.

Like Rene Lowe, Various Artists Thorsten Proffrock has grown up as part of the Basic Channel ecology. He moved from buying to selling tracks at Hard Wax in 1994. And then, two years into an economics degree at Humboldt University, he started to produce his own tracks. It's a tightly interlocking network. He describes Mark Ernestus as a father and the Chain Reaction label as a brotherhood. All of them talk of groove while defining themselves in or against the dancefloor. If Rene Lowe is pessimistic about club life, Proffrock has turned his back on it altogether for his Chain Reaction music. "If you quit club rhythms and DJ defined music, then you can go further into unbelievable things," he enthuses. "At this point we are interested in electroacoustic music and part of the electroacoustic scene is more interested in Techno music."

By using forgotten late 80s Sequential synthesizers and machines with an extreme attention to beat idiosyncrasy and sound shaping, Basic Channel created sequences that were "rolling without an end" (as Substance's Peter Kuschneret puts it). Proffrock maps the way Basic Channel's pathway between Techno and non-club electronics attracted renegades like Porter Ricks and the Monolake duo of Robert Henke and Gerhard Behles. "Basic Channel influenced a lot of people who never heard Techno before," he suggests. "Rene and I really talked a lot about music about how to leave all these 909s and 808s behind, how to make music without percussion sounds, just replace the common claps, snares and hi-hats with other sounds, and Basic Channel defined what we were talking about."

At the end of 1997, Proffrock released the Various Artists track "No B", an awesome 20 minute echomaze of bending harpichords and squashing celeste tones, on the UK's Fat Cat Records. "No B" was recorded in 1995 at the same time as his debut Chain Reaction release, "Various Artists 1-7". "You have these patterns and you have your mixing desk, it's just fun if you're creating these strange delays and reverbs," he explains. "I'm a bit of an addict to creating new delay patterns that kind of circle and feedback. I think that's why it sounds really human and organic, all these filtered delays. The end of 'No B' — I'm really gone away with it. It's just a live flow."

Both the cold warmth of Proffrock's 12 minute long "Reslent: 12" (included on his recent Various Artists CD *Decay Product*), as well as the ear-occluding beauty of his "Erosion" track, are effectively versions of "No B", magnetic mirror mazes of synthetic dub. "All the tracks are mixed live, mainly unedited," he says. "It's just a live mix on the desk, like maybe dub producers have done their things. I think I'm working a bit like these guys, staying in front of my mixing desk using the channels. I don't use any computers yet."

Proffrock's fascination with effects echoes the obsession of Basic Channel's Ernestus and von Oswald with the 80s producers of the Bronx-based reggae producer Lloyd "Bullwacke" Barnes. In the studio, Barnes would often run entire tracks through a graphic equalizer, softening the bass and exaggerating the mid-frequencies, sending the impact of the beat into a decay pattern, turning the voices of singers like Horace



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Andy or Wayne Jarrett into semichoral trebles which would hover across the pulses, ebbing and flowing out of earshot. All these techniques inform the work of both the Basic Channel and Chan Reaction producers. As Thorsten Protzko says, "Dub was a kind of resonance to my soul, because everything I like within Techno music, all these effects, these dub people had it. You see a line between dub and Basic Channel. If I listen to Wacke's sound, Wayne Jarrett, Horace Andy, [or] these mid-70s recordings by Lee Perry or King Tubby or Prince Far I, it's unbelievable."

"Reduce" is a key Chan Reaction process which recurs in the inverted commas of track titles. As terms like subtract, decay, reduce and extract suggest, feeding signals from Sequential synthesizers through the mooring desks' network of effects maintains sequence while deregulating pattern. The effect is compelling: your ear is always chasing what Monolake's Gerhard Behles calls the "tails of sound" (echoes of Basic Channel's rolling sequences without end). You never close on it or resolve it. Patterns disappear around the next corner and you follow stunned, ears searching for a resolution that never arrives. "I've taken away the functional things of dance music, the dance patterns even," a dandified Behles explains while reclining in the office chair at Chan Reaction HQ. "We invest more time in sound. The sound is so important and if you listen to it then you feel like there is nothing more to add to this track."

To all intents and purposes, Gerhard Behles and his Monolake partner Robert Henke don't play any instruments. Behles studied electronic music at the Institute of Sonology in the Hague, then at the electronic music faculty of Berlin's Technical University where he met Henke. Henke had studied "sound engineering" at a film school, training in film sound recording, recording existing sounds and manipulating existing sounds.

With seven years in the electronic academia and one foot in the dance scene, Monolake have a double background that's rare in the UK, but not unfamiliar in Germany, where many people combine interminable university degrees with parallel careers.

If you look at the sleeve for "Occam/Arte", Monolake's latest single, released on the Din label, you see three suns suspended over a grey monolake a setting as lunar as Drexciya's Bubble Metropolis craterscape. "The monolake is close to Yosemite National Park in California," explains Gerhard Behles. "The thing that is astonishing is that from out of this lake you have those stalactites growing."

"Because it's very salty," interrupts Robert Henke. "It's got lot of minerals in it, so what you have are these structures of minerals. It has a very rough surface, like something not of the planet, but from outer space."

"The rocks are getting bigger and bigger because the water is getting less and less," Behles resumes. "Los Angeles draws all the water from the monolake."

Monolake's debut 12", "Qant/Cyan 2", is set in an underwater sky, which merges sensations of swimming through the clouds with flying through the sea. Reverberation billows the sound until it shrooms and fogs. The track plots you, places you in the windoeset looking down at the clouds. Almost inaudible looped birdsong dapples the ear with its intermittence. "We like what is happening to sound if you combine electronic or synthetic sounds with natural sounds," Henke says. "We want to integrate what comes from the outside and not throw it away with volume."

"That's like a very fascinating thing," Behles continues. "We often find there's much more correspondence than you might expect, between concrete sounds that we've just recorded in nature and forests, and the electronic sounds that we find, a much closer resemblance, in a way, than between concrete sounds and instrumental sounds as you may expect."

Henke starts forward animatedly. "You can say, this is a flute sound and this is a bird

sound, but a complicated, modulated shewave can sound just as easily like a natural sound, so it's easier to merge natural sound and electronic sounds."

Monolake's recent Chan Reaction CD *Hörsprung* is characterized by such shifts from naturally occurring rhythms to computerhythm music and back again. "The *ccada* is a rhythmic insect, but it's not 100 per cent light," complains Behles. "You can hear it between [the CD tracks] 'Lantau' and 'Macau', this *ccch-ohh-ohh*, and sometimes it matches exactly our rhythm, and sometimes it's drifting, and sometimes it's matching again. This was a fascinating experience for us. You have the impression that these insects are growing together with our beat."

Monolake are Chan Reaction's main digital maestros, the duo the other producers look up to. "We use Minimal Structure," explains Henke, "which is a Mac program which will just do minimal repetitive patterns. If you just jam on a minimal pattern and every now and then you change the pattern, but you don't change the sound/sound, you have very little to consider in terms of structure, rather, you can consider things in terms of sound, space or colour. What we do then is just play the studio, all the synths, all the editing, all the mixing, all the filtering, all the EQing, all the compression — that's the composition." These effects aren't added to the song afterwards, they are the song.

Henke issues his electroacoustic CDs of steady state sounds on the Imbalance label. *Piercing Music* was made for a sound installation which "gives you a special feeling if you enter the room, deep warmth with some kind of intonation in between." *Piercing Point* is a selected collection of fragments from 1992-97, drawing on a fascination with "the idea of water and randomly recurring natural sounds." A similar aesthetic feeds into the *Hörsprung* CD. The modulating passage between the end of "Macau" and the beginning of "Arte" is filled with bright splashes of water, recalling Jon Hassell's *Ako-Gordon-Jawo*. "The way every amplitude of the waves and every rising and falling merges together with the other sounds is 100 per cent intentional," says Henke. "I regard every movement within the waves as a kind of music."

"Working in a record store we know all types of structures in Techno, in electronic music," remarks Peter Kuschneret. "It's a very ego type of trip you go through, it's not adapted to other stuff. Basic Channel taught us to be like that, to forget about all types." We're feeling the warm insulating throb of his latest Substance track, called "Scint", pulsing around the stepped walls of Hard Wax. Obsessed by Ash Ra Tempel guitarist Manuel Gottsching's E2-E4 (an obsession shared by Basic Channel) and deeply impressed by Porter Rick's downtempo "Redundance" singles, Kuschneret deliberately set out to make "Scint" feel "very bright. Vanquish is doing this as well, the string sounds, the voice of strings, it's a very light feeling. At that time I had a new girlfriend, a new flavour, a new scent."

As Hard Wax's House specialist, Kuschneret is obsessed with the perfect loop. "It's possible to hold one groove at one point that you're really into it," he enthuses. He's far less pessimistic than Rene Lowe about late 90s dubland. He points to Jeff Mills and Claude Young as DJs who activate the forgotten Techno scratch style pioneered by Knights Of The Turntable back in the 80s. "Wouldn't it be wild, I suggest, to hear three House DJs with three decks each, nine turntablists in a circle all playing Ron Trent's 'Altered States'? People are not doing experiments," says Peter. "Maybe it's because it has to be a perfect max all the time."

Rather than the perfect max, Kuschneret and the Chan Reaction producers search out alternating rhythms which make you doubt your mind, forget what you've heard, lose your train of thought, overhaul your sense of recognition. They refer to such sensations as patterns, and they engender such unknown feelings, it's intimidating. Listening to them, your emotions modulate out of shape, sliding across an unknown spectrum. Just as it took years to hear the endpoints of loops as loops, so the sequences they refer to are barely audible as sequences. They accentuate the effect by making each tone listenable in itself. In most Techno, inharmonic tones repel empathy, forcing you to move from individual sounds to patterns among sounds. Chan Reaction create adventures for the ears. The flight of the stylus across the vinyl triggers a chase through the headphones, a hazardous journey across the head.

Chan Reaction releases are distributed through SPD. Porter Rick's Porter Ricks is out now on Mile Plateaux (through SPD). Hard Wax shop Tel: 00 49 30 61 1 301 11, fax 00 49 30 61 1 301 399.



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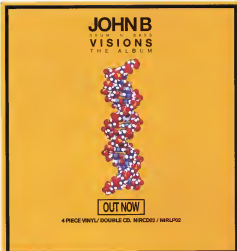
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When **Fela Anikulapo-Kuti** died last August, Nigeria lost one of its most controversial and inspirational cultural figures. Here, the Africa-based writer Lindsay Barrett maps the extraordinary trajectory of Fela's life, detailing the emergence of his patented brand of Afrobeat, his anarchic lifestyle, and the ongoing battles with the Nigerian authorities



chronicle

of a life foretold

No one who knew him well was surprised when Nigeria's greatest musician Fela Ransome-Kuti changed the first part of his double-barrelled surname to Anikulapo in the mid-1970s. He was just being consistent. Throughout his career, up to that point, Fela had constantly changed his mode of living and transformed the nature of his music. Eventually this process of change was to become the force that motivated his entire life.

The renaming was instructive. Anikulapo means 'I have death in my pocket', which is to say, as he often did, 'I will be the master of my own destiny and will decide when it is time for death to take me'. When he died in August of last year at the age of 58, Fela appeared to fulfil the prophecy implicit in that earlier name change, and the manner of his dying was as dramatic and unnuly as the manner of his living.

In the weeks leading up to his death, Fela's condition deteriorated while he refused to accept treatment from Western-trained doctors, in spite of the fact that many of his family were illustrious medics (Koye, the eldest, and former Minister of Health; Beho the younger, who was once President of the Nigerian Medical Association, and is now being detained incognito by the Nigerian government for his outspoken protests against what he believed to be the anti-democratic activities of the military,

and his elder sister, a former matron in Nigeria's health services). To the end Fela was a conscious rebel. The themes of his rebellion never changed, and the anarchy which often seemed to surround his life and music was always tempered by the fundamental truths which he sought to elucidate with regard to both African society and the ongoing exploitation of people in African nations.

Fela's family (see sidebar, page 36) wanted him to become a lawyer, and in 1958 he left Nigeria for the UK, ostensibly to study law. But many of his close friends maintain that he never intended to follow that line, and that he had made his decision to be a musician from his school days.

Once in the UK, Fela enrolled in the Trinity School of Music. The trumpet was his preferred instrument, as most of Nigeria's leading highlife bandleaders were trumpeters and at least two of them, Rex Jim Lawson and Victor Olajide, were early harpists of Fela's. Although his father, the Reverend Israel Oluodun Ransome-Kuti, encouraged him to play the piano, he had begun to practise the trumpet on his own before leaving secondary school, and sat in with many of the popular groups of the day. Bandleaders such as Rex Chicago, Bobby Benson, Eddie Okonja (who also died



Roots and branches

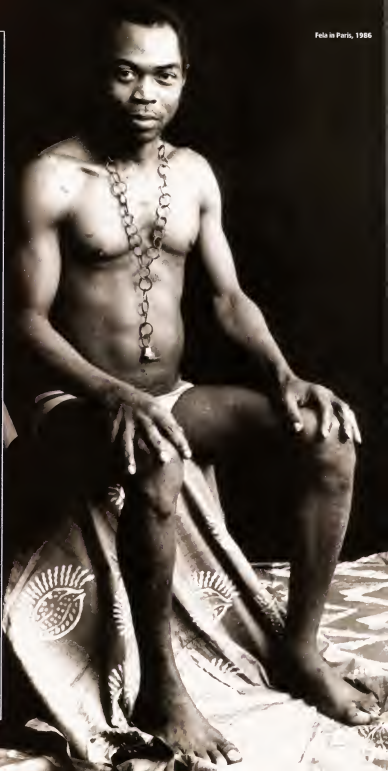
In the early 1960s, Fela Kuti was a familiar figure on the London music scene. At the original Marquee club, located beneath the Academy Cinema on Oxford Street, he would sit in alongside bassist Jack Bruce and drummer Ginger Baker (who would later travel to Nigeria and produce some of Fela's early 70s recordings, including the classic *He Miss Road*) and other musical free-thinkers in Alexis Korner's Blues Incorporated, and often jammed with trombonist Chris Barber, nominally playing traditional jazz, but in a group that even then reflected its leader's wide tastes. Fela always walked with his trumpet and a frown, and although he looked pretty conventional then, dressed in checked sports jacket and flannels, he operated with an unforgettable air of impatience.

Fela's antecedents were both musical and political. His grandfather, the Reverend JJ Ransome-Kuti, was a leading churchman in Abeokuta, capital of the powerful Egbas, and a musician. One of the many West African 'Native Artists' who recorded for the British Zonophone label in the late 1920s, he sang hymns, Christian songs and funeral lamentations in Yoruba; years later, an admirer described these as being "beautifully rendered". At least 22 78rpm records were issued under his name, the inclusion of one "Patriotic Song" and the Abeokuta National Anthem giving a foretaste of things to come where this family was concerned.

Fela was said to have inherited his fiery personality from his mother, Funmilayo, a fearless figure in the struggle for Nigerian self-determination. His father, the Reverend Israel Oludotun Ransome-Kuti, was regarded as a prodigious musician. As the principal of Abeokuta Grammar School, where his pupils included the Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka, he was known as the Dawodu, or leader. He had, according to one observer, "an obsession with music", making the subject compulsory and personally teaching it to all 500 of his charges.

As fervent Nationalists, the Ransome-Kutis fought both the British and other Nigerians enmeshed with the colonial powers. In 1946 Funmilayo founded the Abeokuta Women's Union (later the Nigerian Women's Union) which constantly challenged colonial authority, and helped force into exile the Alake of Abeokuta, the traditional Egba ruler. In *Ake*, his memoir of childhood, Soyinka writes about growing up around their family circle. Related to the Ransome-Kutis on his mother's side, he gives a child's-eye view of the co-operation that existed between Fela's parents. Originally comprising 'educated' women, the Women's Union changed when the Reverend Ransome-Kuti suggested they organise with the female masses. The classlessness of the ensuing movement can be seen reflected in Fela's own attitude to feudal authority.

VAL WILMER



last year) and the late anarchic genius Billy Bragg also encouraged him and spoke highly of his youthful talent. However, Fela once told me that it was the discovery of Miles Davis's early recordings with Charlie Parker that strengthened his commitment to the instrument when he began studying in London.

During his stay in London, Fela also listened to Afro-Cuban music, and began performing in venues frequented by African students and workers with a group of dedicated Nigerian musicians which included the pianist Wole Bucknor, who became the Musical Director of the Nigerian Navy Band, and the fine jazz drummer Bayo Martins. In fact Martins was a seminal influence on Fela's listening habits, and was largely responsible for steering him in the direction he was eventually to take in building a close link between jazz and highlife music.

Fela returned to Nigeria in the mid-60s, and was employed by Nigeria's National Broadcasting Corporation, but he seemed to have little interest in working there. He formed his first professional group, The Koola Lobitos, and in their earliest performances the musical influences which had exercised Fela's imagination in the UK came to the fore. The group made some recordings, and while Fela's trumpet playing, though lyrical, sounded weak in interpretative power, his singing was innovative, more discursive and rational than the general run of highlife vocalising of the time. Fela's musical sensibility drew on the principles of West African popular music, especially its hypnotic, cyclical rhythmic patterns, and he was always conscious of the ability of music to carry a social message in a powerful way. Accordingly, the lyrics he wrote for The Koola Lobitos also demonstrated a desire to bring new subjects into the purview of the music.

In 1968, by which time he had consolidated the membership of The Lobitos, new elements began to surface in the music which were strongly influenced by James Brown's recordings. In that year Fela gave a number of press interviews claiming that Brown had actually "stolen my music." Whatever the truth of the matter, what was clear was that in emphasising the rhythmic and improvisational elements, Fela's music was drawing closer to the kind of extended trance-like workouts that defined Brown's music of the period.

Later the same year, Fela went on a maverick tour to Ghana, the acknowledged home of highlife. He was accompanied and guided on the tour by Benson Idonje, a well-known Nigerian producer who was responsible for the presentation of jazz on Radio Nigeria. But while his music was well received by both Ghanaian audiences and musicians, he felt that in Nigeria his talents were still not appreciated. He either lost or left his job at the radio station after that. While still in Ghana he met a promoter called "Duke", a Ghanaian who had relocated to California, and together they began to plan a tour to the USA.

The tour took place in 1969, and turned out to be a frustrating sequence of triumphs and disaster. It was halted when it was discovered that the promoter had not obtained the proper work permits for all the group's members. In addition, some members absconded, and in a legal fight with some of the local promoters, Fela seized a collection of hired instruments and shipped them back to Nigeria. He left the USA under a cloud of debt and threats of legal action, but in the few months he had been there he also met many musicians and other artists, especially writers and painters, who were harnessing their creative energies to the kind of radical politics that were being espoused by groups such as the Black Panthers. It was on this trip that he realised how valuable an understanding of Africa's history could be to the expansion of his music's outreach, and it was during this trip too that he was able to record some of his latest compositions with a new group of musicians who interpreted his musical vision with a greater level of commitment and ability. He called this group Nigeria 70.

On his return to Nigeria Fela renamed the group a second time, calling it Africa 70. He hired the Kakada (Parrot) nightclub in Yaba, a suburb of Lagos, renamed it the Afro-Spot, and instigated a programme of three live sessions a week that were to produce some of the most extraordinary events in African musical history.

Liberated by the music's new open-ended forms, some of the members of Africa 70 emerged as performing geniuses in their own right: tenor saxophonist Igo Chico Olowechime (replacing Isaac Olusagba), drummer Tony Allen, guitarist Fred Lewis and percussionist Henry "Perdido" Kofi. Fela gradually dropped the trumpet and concentrated on leading the group by conducting it from the front and singing. Eventually his rudimentary keyboard riffs, which he used as part of his conducting formula, began to become more integral to the arrangements. By early 1971 he had stopped playing trumpet solos entirely and Tunde Williams, playing second trumpet, developed into a key player, taking over the important brass parts which Fela introduced into the arrangements.

By now Fela was virtually composing his songs in public. Each week at The Afro-Spot new songs were premiered, and Fela would talk the audience through the meaning of the lyrics and work the group through the arrangement on-stage. In this way classics such as "Lady", "Go-Slow", "Water No Get Enemy", "Chop And Quench", "Dabala" and "Shakara-Oloje" emerged to become part of the urban folklore of Lagos. Not only were the songs massive local hits, but for many Lagos citizens it became imperative to attend these sessions, where Fela's interactive style made the audience a part of the performance.

That year — 1970-71 — Fela set a pace which was incredible, not only in terms of his musical growth but also his philosophical and ideological trajectory. The issues he raised as he discussed the lyrics of his songs grew increasingly topical, and he began the form of public speaking which he termed "yabes" in which he would exhort government officials for their inefficiency, or preach a new form of freedom of expression which he equated with the right to smoke 'lgbu' (marijuana). Before his

trip to the USA, Fela had neither smoked nor drank. He was a serious and committed musician, definitely no libertine. Back in Lagos, he claimed that a young woman he had met in America (who was later to sing on one of his albums) had introduced him to marijuana, and he was now convinced that the use of stimulants was not taboo provided the user was "conscious." This attitude was eventually to contribute greatly towards his many confrontations with the Nigerian government, and his public criticisms became increasingly focused on specific instances of what he considered to be government hypocrisy and the betrayal of national potential.

As his group grew from nine to 16 members, the music became less lyrical and more strident, the arrangements more complex. In 1974 Fela had a serious falling-out with his tenor saxophonist Igo Chico, and in one of the legendary feuds of his life, he vowed to replace Igo himself in 24 hours. According to the legend, Fela practised for 17 hours straight, and when the group appeared at the Afro-Spot that Friday night, he played all the famous Igo Chico tenor saxophone solos, not nearly as brilliantly as the master but with enough competence to satisfy his loyal audience.

This period also marked a turning point in Fela's commercial strategies. He moved from the Afro-Spot to a new club located in another part of Lagos called Sunrider. The club was owned by a legendary Lagos entrepreneur, Chief SB Bakare, and Fela began to operate a full week's schedule. It was here that he first referred to his club as the Shrine, and began to speak of his musical existence as a religious rather than a purely commercial experience.

Fela's recording strategy was a particularly unique one at this point. Almost monthly he would go into the EMI studios in Apapa and produce extended versions of two of the group's most popular and topical compositions. EMI would release the songs immediately, their remarkable sales fuelled by the fact that a few weeks after they were issued on vinyl, Fela would stop singing them in his club. Fela continued this strategy for two years, issuing records like news bulletins, so that he served as a symbol of Nigeria's united national consciousness, as his songs would be heard blaring from loudspeakers across Nigeria as soon as they were released. The fact that his lyrics were in a very direct form of pidgin English was crucial, as it made his records accessible throughout Nigeria and much of Anglophone Africa.



PHOTOS: DAVID COBDO (TOP, LEFT) AND VAN WILDER (BOTTOM LEFT AND FAR RIGHT)

Now Fela decided to build his own management team and control the release and performance of his music himself. In the early 70s, multinational record companies such as EMI, Decca and Philips/Phonogram had a stranglehold on recording and management of groups in Nigeria and elsewhere in West Africa, bankrolling watered-down versions of US soul and Fela's patented Afro-beat. But as Fela developed into a megastar he sought to gain greater benefits from his recording contracts by encouraging competitive bidding among the rival companies for his independently recorded tapes.

The strain of this strategy caused cracks to appear within Fela's own organisation. He tended to be informal and careless with his finances, and some of his musicians broke away when it became difficult for him to pay them regularly. This was the period too when he began to expand his team of female dancers and establish a commune in his mother's house at Mosholoshi-Iro. His sexual appetite was legendary, and many young women submitted themselves to a life of virtual enslavement as he preached an ideology of chauvinistic control and established a lifestyle that was based on his theories of female submission.

With the departure of certain musicians, the nature of the group changed drastically. Fela added more percussion and developed a new style of rhythm guitar voicing, laying a greater emphasis on the guitars and bass to carry the melody lines. He gave control of the reed and brass sections to Lekani 'Ani' Ammashaurin, a bantone saxophonist and one of the stalwarts of Fela's music, and spent more time refining his keyboard playing. Along with the ensemble singing of his female chorus, these developments became the signatures of his music, and the most distinctive sound of Afro-Beat emerged from this era.

Some time in 1974, Fela moved from his Surulere base to the former Ambassador Club, a famous night-spot owned by the Lagos-based Ibo businessman and entertainment tycoon, Chief Kanu. This club was rechristened the African Shrine, and it was here that Fela began to incorporate ritualistic elements into

his performances, including the pouring of libations and ceremonies performed by a succession of visiting traditional priests, some of whom appeared from nowhere, it seemed, and disappeared just as mysteriously. There was a Camerounian high priest who, it was claimed, had sacrificed a human being at the Shrine and brought the victim back to life. Then there was a Ghanaian who performed magic tricks, and a Yoruba 'Babalawo' who gave Ifa divinations for selected members of the audience. Eventually Fela himself was declared High Priest of the Shrine, and each of his performances was prefaced with an elaborate ritual ceremony, replete with face painting, libation pouring, wild dancing and special prayers offered to the ubiquitous 'God of Africa'.

The African Shrine was located right opposite his mother's house, where his commune was still based, and his presence attracted a lot of commercial activity to the area, including a swarm of marijuana dealers. It was in this period, from 1974-76, that both his lifestyle and political attitudes coalesced into a flagrant challenge to the Nigerian authorities.

Apart from openly advocating the smoking of 'igbo' on the theory that 'the God of Africa created this herb to enlighten his people', he also paraded his harem of young women all over Lagos. For a while they were appendages to his entourage, but in mid-1975 he began to incorporate them into his show, first as dancers and then as members of the vocal chorus. Later that year he undertook the famous single-day traditional marriage in which he pledged himself as husband to 28 women.

There followed another change of name for the group. Fela had begun reading esoteric literature promoting the belief that African history had been distorted and misrepresented by Western academics, and his interpretation of these ideas and transformation of them into musical themes became his main concern. Reflecting this embrace of pan-African revisionism, he now called his group Egypt 80.

Fela began applying these radical ideas in a pungent and systematic criticism of the Nigerian Government's own decrepit value system. Inevitably, the state began to fight



back against both his political criticisms and what some government officials referred to as his "immoral" lifestyle, and in what would turn out to be just the first of many raids on his club and commune. Fela's house was raided in daylight by teams of soldiers and police.

During the raid Fela was arrested and taken to the notorious Ajagbon Close jail, where he was hailed as a hero by the prisoners and installed as "president" of one of the toughest cells, named after the infamous dark hole of Calcutta but pronounced "Kalakuta". On his release he immortalised this experience in the extraordinary protest song "Kalakuta Show", and renamed his commune the Kalakuta Republic. This marked a major turning point in his life, and in many ways may have sealed his fate.

Fela's domestic lifestyle, and his battles with the Nigerian authorities, became major selling points for Nigerian tabloids. One newspaper, *The Sunday Punch*, serialised a set of features about the Kalakuta experience, liberally sprinkled with pungent quotes from Fela himself, and sold in numbers hitherto unknown for independent newspapers in Nigeria. His reputation also began to spread abroad. *The New York Times* ran a major feature on him, and his comments began to surface in foreign articles surveying Nigeria's economic and political climates. It is a moot point whether this attention was responsible for his increasing militancy or whether it was the other way round. Whatever the cause, Fela's radicalism increased and his music became even more powerful as a result. The consistency with which he interpreted political events and issues in musical terms was remarkable. The anti-military pieces "Zimber" and "Unknown Soldier" were seminal products of this period. They indicated that Fela was unbowed in the face of sustained attacks from the police and military. Eventually he fell out seriously with his record companies and began to attack them also. It was clear to Fela that the government had been putting pressure on these organisations to undermine his independence, and he set out to prove that he could survive without them. One of his most famous songs emerged during this period, "ITT" (International

Tief Tief), in which he heaped abuse on Chaf MKO Abiola who was then "Vice-President for Africa and the Middle East of ITT", owners of the Decca label.

In a further break from the conventions of the record industry, some of Fela's closest friends were drafted into his organisation to handle contractual and promotional matters. These included the late Kanni "People's Lawyer" Osobu, Alhaj UK Buraimoh, the late Akin Davies and Barrister "Wole Feelings Lawyer" Kiboye. Now Fela began to tour Nigeria playing concerts that drew up to 50,000 people at a time in places such as Port Harcourt, Aba, Benin City, Warri, Enugu, Jos, Kaduna and Calabar. These were not club dates but fully fledged stadium concerts. This strategy, and Fela's increasing popularity, seemed to anger the government even more, and towards the end of 1976, after Fela had returned to Lagos following one of his major national tours, one of the most vicious attacks on his home took place.

The timing of the raid was strategic. Nigeria was about to host the Second World Festival of Black and African Arts (FESTAC 77), and the government obviously wanted to silence Fela before the expected large contingent of international visitors arrived in Lagos for the festival. If this was the intention, it backfired badly. The raid was covered widely in the media, and the songs Fela wrote by way of response emerged as some of his most popular international hits. In fact, during the festival the African Shrine was packed almost every night, proving more popular than any of the official FESTAC events, so much so that most nights Fela and Egypt 80 had to play four shows instead of the normal one or two.

In early 1978 a few months after FESTAC, Fela's home was raided again, and this time the raid was carried out entirely by the military — with tragic consequences. Fela believed that the raid had been ordered personally by the then Head of State General Olusegun Obasanjo, a fellow Ogun State indigene, who had been humiliated by the amount of attention Fela had received during FESTAC. During the raid, Fela's mother, Funmilayo, who was then around 75 years old, was thrown from a first-floor window by "an unknown soldier". In addition, Funmilayo's house, and an adjoining clinic belonging to Dr Beka Ransome-Kuti, were both burned to the ground. Official explanations for the raid were cynically off-hand, which angered Fela even more.



When his mother died some months later from complications arising from the injuries she had received during the raid, Fela led a protest march carrying a coffin to the official residence of the Head of State in central Lagos, and also wrote one of his most tragic hits, "Unknown Soldier", which contained the heart-rending lamentation, "Dem kill my mama, political mama, the only Mama in Africa".

Shortly after the death of Funmilayo, Fela and his group went on a European tour, where he was surprised to discover that he had a massive following, especially in France. He toured for about three months, but on his return to Nigeria some of the key members of Egypt 80 — percussionist Henry "Perdido" Kofi and drummer Tony Allen — left the group. In addition, one of its brighter young stars, the guitarist Kolomo, absconded and remained in Europe. The European tour was a success both critically and commercially, but once again Fela's casual approach to finance led to disagreements within the group. Moreover, he seemed increasingly depressed over the death of his mother.

Although he had never been a big drinker Fela had created a special compound which he called "FelaGro" made from marijuana mixed with the local gin "agard", and he used it extensively during the European tour. The compound was a powerful hallucinogenic and sometimes, when under its influence, his performances were erratic, and the music was mostly held together by Lekeai "Aki" Amneshour, who had developed into a powerful bantone saxophonist, and was officially designated musical director of the group.

During the European tour Fela introduced his teenage son Femi on stage in the

heat of a hard-driving performance in a circus tent outside of Paris. It was a real baptism of fire, as Fela was breaking in a new alto saxophone, and previously had only practised with the group during rehearsals. But before a crowd of more than 10,000 Fela ordered Femi to take his first major solo. Fela stood by the side of the stage driving his son on with shouts of encouragement and derision. The experience proved its worth. Femi now leads a group called Positive Force, and has developed a streak of determination in almost direct response to his father's unorthodox method of apprenticeship.

After his return from Europe, Fela's life and music took on a doomed brilliance which was overshadowed by a cloud of inevitable confrontation. Raids by the police and military became even more regular when he moved to Ikeja and took over another club, where he installed the New African Shrine. His hangers-on from Mosholash-Idi-Oro followed. They virtually repopulated the area around the Shrine bringing hard drugs, especially 'bani' (heroin) and crack, with them. Fela spoke against the use of any drugs other than 'gito', but many members of his entourage, including some of his wives, had already become junkies, a development which only seemed to reinforce the allegations of immorality and criminality that the government was leveling against him.

The confrontation between Fela and the security forces now developed into one of the saddest displays of state terrorism ever seen in Africa, sometimes it appeared that individual government members and departments were warring with each other to see which one was more anti-Fela.

In 1983 Fela announced that he would be standing for President in the forthcoming Nigerian elections on the ticket of his own party, the Movement of the People (MOP), in order to "clean up society like a mop". Following the elections, the military overthrew the new civilian government and the attacks on Fela increased again. He was accused by one agency of flouting the country's currency laws because he returned from an overseas visit with about 1000 US dollars. He was arrested, charged, and kept in detention for almost two years. He was released in 1986 after yet another coup had occurred, but just a few months later he was charged with kidnapping one of the young women who lived at his house and whose father was said to be a senior official in one of the security agencies. Fela was acquitted, but a year or so later he was accused of murder after someone had been killed in a fight at the Shrine. Years later, Fela told me that he believed the dead man was killed and planted in the club by yet another branch of the security services.

Even during this incredibly fraught period, Fela's music retained an innovative strength. Just before the breakdown of apartheid in South Africa at the beginning of the 1990s he began to turn his attention to the subject of world racism, and the economic exploitation and international hypocrisy that sustained it.

His composition 'Beast Of No Nation' evolved out of a statement by South Africa's President P.W. Botha: "This uprising [against the apartheid system] will bring out the beast in us." The song was powerfully argued and the music showed that Fela had not lost his sense of rhythmic vitality in his approach to composition. Many of his last songs written between 1993-96 represent some of his best work, containing large-scale orchestrated arrangements with more freedom for melodic interpretation. In a parallel with the increased sophistication of his music, Fela announced that marriage was an erroneous imposition of control on a fellow human being. Accordingly, he granted freedom to all his wives, or at least those who remained — more than half of



the original 28 had already absconded, although many of them remained resident in his house and as members of his performing ensemble.

Even as Fela was revising his lifestyle, the authorities were closing in. A few weeks before his death, his health shot to pieces by years of official and personal physical abuse, he was paraded in chains on state television in Lagos by yet another security agency, the Anti-Drug Squad. Even in these harrowing circumstances, Fela maintained his dignity, challenging the director of the agency openly, and declaring that he did smoke marijuana and considered it not only his right but a privilege ordained for humanity by the "God of Africa".

By now, Fela's poor health was obvious. He was skeletal, but his spirit was untowed. He continued to appear at the Shrine, and whenever the group, led by Lekani Ammashau, struck up its signature tunes, he still found the strength to leap on stage and blast his adversaries and proclaim his belief in the rejuvenative

power of his personal vision. To the end, Fela believed that this vision was motivated by a spiritual link to the ancestral power of Africa, and that even if it did not save his own life it had the power to restore a sense of political renewal in the continent.

Fela died on 2 August 1997. Some members of his family announced that he was suffering from AIDS, and have demanded that the Nigerian government establish a campaign to officially recognise the AIDS issue as a potentially catastrophic one for the whole of Africa. In this way they probably hope that Fela's death might help bring about the kind of fundamental changes in Nigerian society which he strove for during his life, but failed to achieve, in spite of his constant battles with officialdom.

Fela's funeral developed into a festival of joy and anger unprecedented in Lagos. Three days of processions culminated in a public service which brought the city of well over five million people to a standstill — obviously, Fela's spirit still ran deep in the hearts of the masses.

“A few weeks before his death, his health shot to pieces, Fela was paraded in chains on state television by the Anti-Drug Squad”

It is no exaggeration to say that Fela's memory will always symbolise the spirit of truth for a vast number of struggling people in Africa and beyond. His music and the determined consistency with which he challenged authority and demanded that popular ambitions and

attitudes should be reflected in the official objectives of the nation's leadership will continue to create a basis for radical challenges to the complacency of officialdom. His musical legacy is a solid one. His compositions are effectively underscored by the huge number of records which he leaves behind. Everyone who worked with him retained a deep sense of his musical spirit, and in the future, his formal musical legacy will grow even stronger as the extraneous elements of his wild, anarchic lifestyle give way to reflective tributes to his talent and the philosophical relevance of his ideas.

The members of Fela's group, devastated by his passing, will find it difficult to keep the flame alive, but there is also a need to preserve the traditions which Fela established. One of his greatest legacies is the consummate technical proficiency which he enabled his instrumentalists to achieve even without travelling beyond Nigeria. Some of his soloists, such as the young baritone saxophonist 'Showboy' and the leader Lekani Ammashau, have the breadth of experience as well as the evanescent quality of stardom in their veins.

Now that he is no longer alive, the eternal values which gave birth to Fela's perpetual struggle to find justice in life will gain new strength through the immortal power of his musical vision. Copyright © Lindsay Barrett 1998. All rights reserved. Many of Fela Kuti's recordings have been reissued in the UK by Sterns Africa (through Sterns).

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invisible jukebox

Every month we play a musician a series of records which they're asked to identify and comment on — with no prior knowledge of what they're about or how. This month it's the turn of...

Suicide

Tested by Edwin Pouncey

Suicide was formed in New York in 1970 by sculptor/singer Alan Vega (pictured left) and the former free jazz musician Martin Rev (who was credited with playing 'instrument' on the duo's subsequent records). Initially, the unique combination of Vega's alien rockabilly howl and Rev's stripped-back synthesizer drone/pulse fell on deaf ears. But after a three year hibernation period the duo re-emerged in 1976 at the time when New York punk was at its height, finally releasing their debut album the following year on ex-New York Dolls manager Marty Thru's Red Star label. In 1978 they toured Europe and played support to The Clash and Elvis

Costello. Suicide's presence usually invoked a hostile reaction from the audience (as can be heard on the notorious *23 Minutes Over Brussels*). Their second album, *Alan Vega/Martin Rev — Suicide*, was produced by Ric Ocasek, leader of The Cars and a longterm friend and admirer. It was released in 1980 by Island/Ze Records, but despite favourable reviews it sold poorly, and Vega and Rev ceased Suicide operations in order to concentrate on their solo careers. Vega subsequently recorded a handful of relatively conventional rockabilly-influenced albums, and even had a Top Five hit in France with "Jukebox Babe", while Rev produced a series of one-off

albums for various labels. In 1988 they reformed under the Suicide banner and released *A Way Of Life* (with Ocasek again as producer) on the UK independent Chapter 22, promoting the record with a mini-tour where they played support to Siouxsie And The Banshees. Since then, Vega and Rev have continued to work as solo artists, but always eventually regrouping as Suicide.

The duo were tested in their hotel room while on a promotional visit to London. Both were in fine form, shooting new ideas and old memories at each other, and courteously remarking how much they were enjoying the experience.



JOHNNY BURNETTE TRIO

"The Train Kapt A-Rollin'" from *Rockabilly Boogie* (Bear Family)
 Alan Vega: Cramos?
 Martin Rev: Stray Cats?
 AV: It's someone from New

York, right? I can hear it in the lyrics

It's Johnny Burnette.

AV: I never listened to him much actually

Who were your favourite performers from this era?

AV: Gene Vincent, Eddie Cochran, Elvis. I heard this guy's music but I never got into it at the time. I like it. MR: It's good, it's genuine rockabilly

Do you still listen to a lot of rockabilly, Alan?

AV: Nah, I'm going through a period when I'm not listening at all. I check out the rap stations on the radio, a little rock 'n' roll. Soundtracks! I like soundtracks. I've passed through my rockabilly phase. I graduated from Elvis and now I'm looking for another god

Really?

AV: Nah, I'm kidding around

ELVIS PRESLEY

"Inherit The Wind" from *Back In Memphis* (RCA)
 AV: [Instantly recognising the voice of the King] Do you listen to this one?

I'm afraid I don't.

AV: You picked a great song. I love it

MR: Here he's singing pure gospel

Is Elvis a big hero figure for both of you?

MR: He wasn't a hero of mine, but when I saw his first *Ed Sullivan* Show appearance, I must have been six or seven years old, I couldn't help being moved by that image

AV: My mother's big thing was Frank Sinatra, she hated everything that our generation listened to. I was a little kid and I remember my mother laughing her ass off the first time she saw *Elvis on Ed Sullivan*. I thought that was totally cool

What's your favourite Elvis period?

MR: Before he went to Hollywood

AV: I think the early Sun stuff, when he's still young. After the Army start he started going down. But even during that period there are some good songs. There's this one he wrote after splitting up with his first wife, you know that song?

MR: "Suspicion"

AV: Saddest fucking thing I ever heard in my life, man. Elvis's voice just says it all. You want to hear a true story? After Elvis died, a week or two later I got pneumonia. So one night I'm dreaming I was at Elvis Presley school, and he's whipping me saying, "Wake up! Wake up! Wake up!" Suddenly I wake up sweating, I'm coughing, I'm half dead, and the phone rings about ten seconds later. I pick up the fucking phone and the guy at the other end asks, "Can I speak to Mr Presley please?" I said, "This is it, I'm dead. Three or four months later this other guy called and asked for Mr Presley again. Apparently the guy who lived there before me

was called Presley. Can you believe that? It's the scariest fucking thing that ever happened to me

THELONIOUS MONK SEPTET

"Epistrophy" from *Monk's Music* (Riverside)
 MR: You're making it easy for me. It's "Epistrophy", great title

What memories does this bring back?

MR: Seeing Monk when I was 16 years old, live at the Five Spot [John Coltrane's saxophone solo begins]. Monk and Trane, that was a few years before I could get in to the Five Spot. That whole New York period is a cultural thing, even if you didn't experience it. Everybody got recognition and was understood [but]. Monk was put aside for years and years, although everybody played his shit. Miles used to play his stuff but Monk never played a Miles tune. Monk and Dizzy Miles learnt everything through him

As a keyboard player, do you feel an affinity with Monk?

MR: Not as a keyboard player, but he was influential. Miles was more influential in a mainstream way. He had something that the middle of the road groups could come in on, but you couldn't just rip off Monk. For me he was the only thing I would come near to calling an idol, a father figure

What do you think, Alan?

AV: I think it's great. He just took bebop and twisted it all around. He's a great bebop player

MR: He's the most bebop of all the players, almost every phrase he uses is pure bebop. You can see his view of life, the way he saw the streets, lights and buses, along with his sense of humour. He had a Haitian background, like many jazz cats had

AV: A little voodoo, huh?

MR: Well, maybe

LARRY YOUNG

"Khadi Of Space Part Two (Welcome)" from *Lawrence Of Newark* (Perception)

AV: Sun Ra? I don't know who it is but I love it

MR: Larry Young

Spot on. It's a jazz featuring James Blood Ulmer on guitar from his rare 1973 *Lawrence Of Newark* album.

MR: It's not out on CD? [He looks at a xerox copy of the LP cover] I didn't think so

This is the kind of music you might have played in your pre-Sukidee free jazz period with Reverend B?

MR: Definitely. Sometimes it would get into a groove, maybe a little more rock than funk. You can hear the funk influences here, too, which is cool. You wouldn't expect to hear music like this from Larry when he was on Prestige or Blue Note, but when Tony Williams brought him into Lifetime it was like the breakthrough. I was lucky enough to know Tony, I played with him

Tell me about that.

MR: I was 19 years old. I was living seven blocks down from where Tony was living. He was playing with Miles, and one afternoon I thought I'd just go by. I understand now how cool he was. He just let me in from the street not knowing me at all. I kind of approached him like he was a schoolteacher and

maybe see if I could get in as a student of his. From the lobby he asked me to come up, we talked for a while, we hung out and got to know each other. He invited me down to a couple of sessions with different people for a group he was putting together while he was with Miles. Sometimes he asked me to play some of the songs he was writing on piano. His girlfriend at the time was this incredibly wonderful chick. I always felt that once they broke up that was when it somehow didn't work for him, because she was just one of a kind. Tony was a beautiful guy, he didn't have to pay any attention to me at all, but he just took me in and was very open

AV: [Referring back to the record] I've got to get a copy of this shit, it's very spacey

MR: Somebody should put this out



LOU REED

Extract from *Metal Machine Music* (RCA Red Seal)

AV: It's not Glenn Branca is it?
 MR: Rhys Chatham? It's not Frappé is it?

He's a fellow New Yorker. He once showed an Iron Cross in his head. He's just had a Top Ten song in the UK charts.

AV: Give me an intro!

LR:

Av: Give me another

LR: ... VVV

AV: It's Lou Reed's *Metal Machine Music*, it's one of my favourite records of all time. It's the only thing that Lou Reed's ever done, apart from *The Velvet Underground*, that I like, the rest of it is shit. I listened to that one day in a loft with two huge speakers at each side of my head. The first time I heard it I said, "This is it! His record company wanted to send him to a psychiatrist when he walked in with this, they thought he had gone out of his mind. For me, *Metal Machine Music* was his final statement

Were you affected by people like La Monte Young and Tony Conrad?

MR: I tend to be a Minimalist anyway, just by nature. I wasn't influenced directly

AV: When this came out, we were doing *Suicide* already. We were influenced by *The Velvet Underground* before Lou Reed did this

MR: The crazy thing was we already sounded like this, we didn't think anybody else was going to come up with what we were doing

AV: You should hear our rehearsal tapes from those days

I'd love to.

MR: I have at least one

AV: [To Martin excitedly] Let's go pull 'em out. Let's go to a studio and put 'em on to a CD. What do you think?

WE

"In Time" from *As Is* (Asphodel)

MR: That's like the beginning to "Rocket USA" It's nice



NEW

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This anthology of over 30 of the best Invisible Jukeboxes, the most popular feature in *The Wire*, is to be published by Quartet Books on 25 March 1998 priced £10.00

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beyond the pail

Buckhead is America's strangest guitar hero, a cartoon character roaming an imaginary theme park populated by Derek Bailey, Bill Laswell, Irrigotti, Scratch Pickz, some Caribbean pirates and Leatherface. Words: James Rotondi

South of San Francisco, in an otherwise nondescript town called Colma, there are vast graveyards knitted together as far as the eye can see. Weathered statues stare coldly, bearing silent witness to a veritable metropolis of the dead, and the only sounds are the dim rush of the freeway and the Northern California wind, lately stroked by the menacing weather current El Niño. Those, and the deliberate footsteps of a gangly, six-foot-three-inch man wearing a white face mask and an inverted Kentucky Fried Chicken bucket on his head. Don't be afraid: Buckhead comes here a lot. It's where the freshly gifted avant-metal guitarist — at the age of 28 he is already a veteran of projects with provocateurs like Bill Laswell, Bootsie Collins, John Zorn and Derek Bailey — comes to find peace, albeit an uneasy peace.

"That's one of my favorite places in the world," Buckhead's bashful, guileless alter-ego Brian Carroll explains later. "Cemeteries are just very calm, peaceful places. I always have a really nice, strange feeling when I go there." Why the need for such chilling respite? Maybe it's because of the torrent of activity The Pail One has been involved in recently, including Arcana, the Laswell-configured supergroup, whose most recent Axom LP *Arc Of The Testimony* features Buckhead delivering his most incandescent playing yet, over the potent last drum tracks of the late Tony Williams and alongside the squalling horns of Pharoah Sanders, Byard Lancaster and Graham Haynes. Then there's the solo disc *Colma*, a spacious slab of pastoral guitar-hop inspired by the city of graves and fleshed out by Prais and former Limbomaniacs drummer Brian, along with sometime *Invasi* Scratch Pickz DJ T-Disc, who also battles with Buckhead in the live group Giant Robot.

A charter member of Prais — he appears alongside Bootsie, Bernie Worrell, Afrika Baby Barn, Laswell and Brian on the group's 1992 debut, as well as more recent releases like *Metatron* and *Socris* — Buckhead's tenure in the Laswell caucus has also produced the Ambient-improv intrigue *Dreamatorium*, credited to Death Cube K (an anagram coined by pianist Tom "Doc" Darter). The 1996 Sub-Meta release *Day Of The Robot*, a Laswell construction with Junglist Nrg, was arguably the first attempt to draw lead guitar extemporization into a drum 'n' bass context. Like an accidental postmodernist, Buckhead thrashes, even humiliate, the clichés and expectations of the speed guitar canon, even as he invites it towards new technical heights. That subversive streak is as much what makes him compelling as his alleged half-boy/half-chicken pedigree or his highly personal slang in which fingers become "nubs" and guitar's translate as "robotic bonesaw extensions." Ditto his perverse attraction to graveyards.

Like a million pubescent American boys in the 60s, mild-mannered Carroll began playing guitar in the aftermath of Eddie Van Halen, an era signified by flash guitar fever, a metaphorical arms race in the realm of the Metal virtuoso. Young Carroll was steeped in the Reagan-era precision ethic and blinding harmonic-minor runs of guitar athletes like Steve Vai, Randy Rhoads, Yngwie Malmsteen and his former teacher, Mr. Big's Paul Gilbert, whose sense of humor was considerably more lively than that of most "neo-classical shredders." Gilbert's irony was surely an influence on Buckhead, whose work is marked by a playfulness and pop culture paranoia conspicuously missing from the Malmsteen milieu. "It's weird that I reference Yngwie a lot," says Carroll, who remains admirably modest about his imposing discography. "But I'm a very inward person, and he's such a strong, confident, I don't-care-what-you-think person. I admired that as much as anything — his intensity and the way he really lives it."

In the 60s populist, pre-alternative rock landscape, slowhand solos were decidedly odd, and dainty diabolos like Joe Satriani still hadn't been overrun by Glenn Branca's marauding youth brigade and Seattle's Grunge lords. Buckhead twisted the guitar magazine-fueled "shred" guitar aesthetic further by moving away from the increasingly codified Classical Metal or Country Metal hybrids. Instead, he incorporated concepts gleaned from Nicholas Slonimsky's *Melodic Patterns*, in particular octave displacement — the transposition of notes in a scale or line an octave above or below their normal position — and the melodic figure called the quadrational arpeggio, which is as daunting as it sounds. But perhaps more importantly, Carroll was absorbing a cast of diverse anti-cultural heroes, who would prove just as integral as Slonimsky or Malmsteen in the resurgent Buckhead Era.

He studied martial arts for two years after developing a fascination with Bruce Lee's

"elegance" and "intensity for training", and spent so much time watching B-grade horror movies like *Halloween* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* that his mother took to calling him Boo. Long before Michael Jackson's fall from grace, Carroll was mimicking the singer's "moonwalk" dance steps and robotic movements in his parents' living room. "Jackson was the last of the innocents," laments Carroll, who still does the Jackson herky-jerk on stage, though dressed in an XXL yellow rain suit and clutching a severed plastic hand. "He was someone kids could really believe in." It's no accident that Jackson's 3D *Captain EO* movie was a main attraction at the Disneyland theme park, a stone's throw in Los Angeles terms from Carroll's house in nearby Claremont. The theme park, which he estimates he's visited at least 500 times, is Buckhead's central muse and the inspiration for his "primary goal in life": the creation of his own children's theme park — Buckheadland.

"A lot of my musical inspiration comes from the Disneyland rides, and especially the music on them," he explains, offering the Haunted Mansion and Pirates of the Caribbean as sentimental favourites. "I've always thought that the music I'd make for a total experience like that would be the raddest music, where every sense is being dealt with. I like what that approach does for my creative thinking. This is the part of the rollercoaster where you do a loop? It takes my brain way outside of scales or chords. It's about an experience; I'm not thinking about technical stuff at all."

Among the still-theoretical attractions at Buckheadland is a ride "where you die and come back to life" — called, appropriately, *Disembodied*. "I always thought that would be the ultimate ride," Carroll whispers, "to experience your death but be able to live through it." The Buckhead Chamber of Horrors, Carroll hopes, would be "a lot scarier than any regular Haunted Houses, it would be like the horrible feeling you get when you wake up from a nightmare." Other treats would include *Leatherface's Castle* — a tribute to the tasteful *Texas Chainsaw* assassin — and a Bruce and Jet Lee martial arts emporium. *Robotland* would be populated by modular Japanese robot figures like *Giant Robot*, as well as *Slipdisc* and *Aquabot*, Buckhead's arch nemesis. (The entire Buckhead Jap-bot cosmology is cannily detailed on the 1994 Sony Japan release *Giant Robot*, featuring the narration of Iggy Pop.) Wouldn't some of the rides prove frightening to many of the children Buckhead hopes to bring in? "Well," he considers, "there would be restricted areas. . ."

In 1991, Buckhead had become something of a cult figure on the San Francisco scene, where he'd relocated with his group The Deli Creeps, who appointed themselves in butcher's aprons and headgear. Buckhead's bizarre persona and skewed virtuosity were a natural fit in San Francisco's freak-favourable musical community, and he was befriended by members of The Umbonians, Primus and Mr. Bungle, whose guitarist, Trey Spruance, introduced Bucket to John Zorn. "Zorn showed up at a solo gig I was doing at Klub Komotion," remembers Carroll. "He said he thought I would work well in an improvisatory setting." What Zorn had in mind was Derek Bailey's *Company Week*, the annual London Improv fest which paired musicians in random couplings, including some who had never met, as was the case with Buckhead and Bailey.

For Buckhead, *Company Week* was a revelation, made all the more present because of its timing. When he left for the UK gigs, he was already well into negotiating a major label deal in the States, one that promised a handsome advance and the opportunity to gratify his ambitions of being a true blue guitar hero. *Company Week* encouraged him to reassess his artistic priorities. "I just wasn't ready for it," he says of the pending record deal. "There were pressures I had never dealt with. When I went to England, I got with Zorn and Bailey, and I felt really free again. Zorn pulls off his music, does everything he likes to do, and he still makes enough money to live and play his music exactly the way he wants. Inside, I knew that was the way I wanted to do things."

"Also, reacting to pure sound like that was something I hadn't done before," he confesses. "At that time I didn't know much about improvisation, so to do it at the



level those people are on made a very big impact on me." On the last night of the series, Bailey walked onstage wearing "an old man mask and a kumono." Near the end of their performance, Bailey reached over and raised Buckethead's hand like a boxing judge announcing a new champion. "It was a very magical moment," shrugs Carroll (the performance is documented on *Incur Records' Company 91*). After returning from the UK, Buckethead admittedly sabotaged his major label opportunity and quickly alienated himself from his manager.

"That's my worst trait," he shrugs. "I never want to hurt anybody, but I hurt people more by not confronting things. I just run away." With family and friends chorusing that he'd "completely blown it," a confused Carroll got a call from Laswell, who had just viewed Buckethead's bizarre homemade video, in which the 20-year-old beanie-pole is introduced shredding in full regalia by a whining MC named Pinchface. Laswell invited Buckethead to New York to record an album with Bootsy Collins — a genuine dream come true. "I first heard Bootsy's Rubber Band when I was in my teens," gushes Carroll, "and I thought Bootsy was the baddest guy in the world."

Setting up to record the mutant speedfunk of *Transmutation* (*Mutatis Mutandis*) at Brooklyn's Greenpoint Studios, Carroll arranged a gaggle of items from home around his amplifier, a gesture that moved Axon house guitarist Nicky Skopelitis to turn Buckethead on to the similarly eccentric Glenn Gould. "I was nervous about playing with those guys," he explains, "so I brought a Giant Robot doll, a couple of *Creepy* and *Eerie* magazines, a cut-off hand toy, my mask — just stuff I felt comfortable with." After *Transmutation* morphed Buckethead's stupefying speed and angular harmonic personality into a funk-friendly setting, new projects started ramping up like the zombies in George Romero's slasher classic *Dawn of the Dead*, Henry Kaiser's *Hope You Like Our New Direction* (Reckless), Anton Fier's *Dreamspeed* (Avant), Bootsy's *Zikatron*, Will Ackerman's *The Opening* (Windham Hill), Axon's *Funktronikman*, Jonas Hellborg and Michael Shrieve's *Octave of the Holy Innocents*.

Mapped out by Laswell on a napkin in a late-night tap session, 1994's *Dreamatorium* was produced in a five-hour studio marathon with just Laswell and Buckethead on bass, guitars and "sounds." It exploits cinematic reverberations, prepared guitar trindles and trills, and Laswell's throaty, subsonic bass tones on occult-tinged pieces like "Terror By Night," "Dark Hood," and "Maps Of Impossible Worlds." Careful, delicate phrasing smooths fingerstyle moves, ruffled nose textures and an elastic approach to time and space serve distinct moods, a sensitivity Buckethead attributes to the practice of subjecting himself to disorienting stimuli. "I like working on music after watching *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*," he admits, "because it puts me in such a weird state. I'll watch the scene where Leatherface slams the door shut and a creepy, low-drone comes in. I would use that drone to solo over, which was the sound of that guy's death. I guess that's kind of bad, but I was really into it."

Recent Bucket-abetted releases include the fine *Private Live* album, issued by Alan Douglas's reactivated Douglas Music label, and Peeces, an Eddie Hazel-like workout with drummer Brian. The masked guitar assassin is also stimulated by his collaborations with T-Disc in *Giant Robot II*, as well as the rest of the Invisib! Scratch Pickle, the celebrated Oakland-based DJ posse. "Disc and the Scratch Pickle are all about sound," he notes. "Masterstar Mike is like a mad scientist, he's very emotional on his outlook. Q-Bert is really into being the best, he calls me to ask me how I

inspire myself. They're all really humble and their whole outlook is so refreshing — it isn't like talking to a guitarist about notes and scales. Every time I get off the phone with one of the Pickle, I'm really excited."

And has the chicken-picker picked up any turntable tips? "I'm not bad," he says sheepishly. "There's a technique they use called *The Crad*, which is a bit like the way I tap when I pull off the string towards myself. They hold their thumb near the end of the fader and then they roll their fingers on it to produce a triplet effect. I practice a lot to those breakfast records they make. They're pushing the envelope real hard, and I think that whole thing is going to explode. I'm just really happy they let me in their world."



"When we are no longer children we are already dead," said the sculptor Constantin Brancusi, a quote which could have come from the mouth of Brian Wilson or Buckethead. In plaintive, clean-toned pieces like Coltrane's "Wandering" or Dreamatorium's Eddie Hazel ode "Maggot Dream," there's a sentimentality and longing at work that seems utterly at odds with the trash culture fetishism of *Giant Robot* or the Praes star chamber. Throughout his career, sprinkled among song titles like "Godzilla" and "Day Of The Robot," are more vulnerable tags such as "I Love My Parents" — orchestrated on *Giant Robot* with strings by Karl Berger — and the charming "For Mom." If Buckethead has

found himself performing mostly in company that subscribes to John Cage's advice that we "give up ideas of order, expressions of sentiment, and all the rest of our inherited aesthetic claptrap," that doesn't mean that he does.

In fact, preserving, or at least staying in touch with his childhood innocence and enthusiasm is Buckethead's primary artistic concern, and it's a battle he seems to be winning. "When we're children, we dream big," he says. "When I was a kid I would have loved to be on the cover of a guitar magazine. But when I finally was, in Japan, it meant a lot, but because I wasn't obsessed with playing, it didn't mean as much to me. At some point I lost my love for it. I've been keeping a journal the last three months, and there's been a huge progression since I started writing. Now my feeling about music and life is becoming the way it was when I was a little kid again."

"I brought a Giant Robot doll, a couple of Creepy and Eerie magazines, a cut-off hand toy, my mask — just stuff I felt comfortable with"

"The most peaceful place I can go is where I play well and my hands are strong. That makes me want to play harder than I have in a long time. I feel like I'm rediscovering that whole thing now. I feel completely rejuvenated."

Aiding his spiritual/musical convalescence is a biography of the Chicago Bulls' great basketball player Michael Jordan. "I'm actually much more interested in the way athletes train than the way musicians do," says Buckethead, who finds musicians' tawdry drug histories more tragic than mythic. "I love when people are at the top of their game. Jordan has all the money he could possibly need, but his drive to win is still the main thing. A lot of people lose that. He really lives it."

Staring among the gravestones of Colma, the lanky musician does seem odd at peace with himself, but he's the first to admit that he's never quite done. "I've had this dream my whole life," he describes, "where there's this presence. It's a terrifying feeling, like someone is holding me. I wake up within the dream and I'm aware I'm in the dream, and I know I need to get out of the dream immediately. But they — or it — are holding me there. It could be a spirit of some kind, sometimes it feels evil, but other times it seems really calm. Like the statues in the cemetery — their eyes look out to nothingness. It's very powerful, but peaceful at the same time." ... *Buckethead releases currently available in the UK include Bucketheadland (Avant), Peeces (Avant) and Giant Robot (Sony Japan), all through Harmonia Mundi*

charts

Playlists from the outer limits of planet sound

A Typical 15

Flaming Lips Zaireeka (Warner Brothers)
Shellac Terralinn (Touch & Go)
Lella Space Love (Rephlex)
Paddington Breaks Smart But Casual (JLL)
David Holmes Don't Die Just Yet (The Holiday Girl — Arab Strap Mix) (Gol Beat)
Gastr Del Sol Camofleur (Domino)
Teenage Fanclub Broken (Creation)
AC/DC Problem Child (Atlantic Sessions)
Mulder Don't Believe (Urban Takeover)
Add N To X On The Wires Of Our Nerves (Satellite)
Fridge Lign (Output)
Tortoise TNT (City Slang)
Yo La Tengo Autumn Sweater (My Bloody Valentine Mix) (Matador)
Aerial H Wedding Song No 3 (Domino)
Kid Loco A Grand Love Story (Yellow)
Compiled by Keith Cameron, XPR, Monday–Thursday 9–11pm

Complete Steps 15

Big Swifty Acrosses (Cherry Smash)
Various Land Of The Rising Nose Vol 2 (Charmel Music)
Asteroid #4 Mass Transfer (Mind Expansion)
Discolor Discolor (September Girls)
Organisation Tone Poast (RCA)
Jon Hassell Vernal Equinox (Lovely Music)
Laddio Bolocke Y Toros (Hungarian)
EXP EXP (Hollows Hill)
Willis Matthews CDAnn (Annetteworks)
Erno Király Phoenix (ReR)
Funkadelic Maggot Brain (Westbound)
Miles Davis In Concert (Columbia)
Rhys Chatham sh iNTone)
Super ESP Super ESP (Helty)
BS2000 BS2000 (Grand Royal)
Compiled by Dave Sogal, Cosmic Shop, WCB 89.8FM, Cleveland, Ohio or www.wcb.org, Mondays 7–9.30am

Circus Maximus 15

Tortoise TNT (City Slang)
Shinjuku Fifth Razed By Wolves (Iridium)
Robin Rimbaud The Garden Is Full Of Metal (Sub Rosa)
RLW Tulpas (Selektion)
Various Picnick Mit Hermann (Rhiz)
Dumb Type Remix (Foil)
Spectre The Second Coming (Wordsound)

Morgan Geist The Driving Memoirs (Clear)
Darrin Verhagen Soft Ash (Dorobo)
Gastr Del Sol Camofleur (Domino)
DJ Vadim USSR Reconstruction (Ninja Tune)
Tosca Fuck Dub Remixes (G-Stone)
Terranova DJ Kicks (Studio MK7)
Sofa Surfers The Plan (Beanfield Mix) (Klein)
Kretak Carsamba (Downfall Plastics)

Compiled by Christophe Tappin, Circus Maximus, Radio Arc-En-Ciel, Orleans, France

The Office Arabesque

Pere Ubu Pennsylvania (Cooking Vinyl)
McCoy Tyner Together (QJC)
Lithops Uni Umik (Song)
Maryann Mursal The Journey (Real World)
Kandis Diddop 12" (Karaoke Kalk)
Rigel Vinkeloer Trio Cag (Slack)
Various The Big Score (EMI)
Ginter Muller & Jim O'Rourke Weighing (For 4 Bars)
Brooklyn Jungle Soundsystem with Dr Israel Next Step (Baraka Foundation)
Oval Dek (Thrill Jockey)
HCS Babes In Arms (ROIR)
Burkhard Stangl Recital (Dunan)
Twilight Circus Dub Sound System Dub Plate Selection (M Records)
Big Kwam Execution Expert 12" (Creative Entertainments)
Various The Holy Church Of Pharma (Pharma)
Compiled by The Wire Sound System

15 More Dodgy Group Names

Ashtray Navigations
Evil Moisture
Ditchcroaker
Beer Mosh
Vomito
Screechy Weasel
The Potatomen
Hypnotic Clam Bake
Swollen Members
Uncle Wiggly
Wank
Flug
The Chubbies
Ovarian Trolley
Leather Mole

All genuine group names compiled by The Trower

sound check

Underground, overground: March's selected albums and 12" s

Photo: Marc Pere (Bae released in press) 19



Gato Barbieri
Laino America
IMPULSE! IMP 22362 2XCD

Not too long after his 15 minutes — or two hours — of fame with the music for Bertolucci's *Lost Tango in Paris* in 1972, Argentine tenor player and composer Laino Gato Barbieri slipped into disco mode and then obscurity. But just prior to that rather depressing descent he completed the two albums that make up this Impulse! reissue, and which are probably his most enduring work.

Associated with 60s free jazz — he cut the classic *Comet Communion* with Don Cherry

Barbieri moved towards a fusion of Coltrane and Latin American music. The *Laino America* sessions were recorded in 1973-74 in Buenos Aires, Rio De Janeiro and Los Angeles, and issued as *Chaparral One* through to *Four*. The first and second chapters comprise this two CD set, which features some takes wholly or partially unissued before.

As Ed Mitchell's rather lurid sleeve notes tell us, World Music wasn't thought of then and the man prototype was Stan Getz and "Jazzolais". When Barbieri arrived in Buenos Aires he sought out eclectic groups of musicians with a bias to tango, samba and

Ran-Andean folk music, including the bandoneon player Dino Saluzzi. Later recordings were made in Rio and back home in LA with some of the same musicians flown in. But Barbieri dominates all of these sessions, his lone hard-edged like Coltrane's and broadened with a wide, romantic vibrato. To generate excitement he distorts by humming and growling simultaneously, or through high-pitched multiphonics.

The most successful tracks are with the smaller groups where the saxophone doesn't need to work so hard to dominate the massed percussion — the plangent "Nuncia Mia", for example. The first version features a quartet including Saluzzi and the stately tempo allows Gato to play with affecting and uncharacteristic lyricism. The previously unissued Los Angeles version recorded a few months later is cluttered by comparison.

The same is true of the two versions of the afflicting "Laino America", except that here it's the small group version that was unissued. For this reason, Barbieri's playing is best appreciated in small doses. As with Cecil Taylor's music, it can be exhilarating, but unlike Cecil, Gato's range of ideas can be limited. Even so, *Laino America* is an important reissue.

ANDY HAMILTON

Bassholes
Blaze Roots
REVENANT 704 CD

I didn't want to like *Bassholes*. First, they've got a stupid name. Second, the two guys in the group (Don Howland on guitar and vocals, drummer Rich Lusk) put a girl showing a nipple on the cover. I wanted to dismiss them as careless trash bands, along with the PC-baiting sleeve notes (by Dick "Blues Boy" Rosenthal) eddying the virtues of horny macho workmen. But, then I played the disc.

Rosenthal states: "The two man style heard here is, in some respects, a musical outgrowth of the great Columbus combs bands of the 20s and 30s." It's certainly recorded that way, a scabrous, paper thin, stepo singed lo-fi rumble. But, oh baby, how the music rocks! *Bassholes* will appear in heavy type in the next edition of Joe Carducci's *Rock And The Pop Narcotic*. They've weaned the Neanderthal offspring of The Fall and The Magic Band ("Nakems"), Link Wray and "Funky Drummer" ("Light Bulb Boogie") a significant achievement.

Revenant has released avant gardenie by Cecil Taylor and Derek Bailey, bigwigs by The Stanley Brothers, and a convocation of

Reviewed this month:

Gato Barbieri *Bassholes* Dock
Boggs *Buckfunk 3000* John
Cage *Circadian Rhythms*
Coil *Ornette Coleman Holger*
Czukay *Delta T Dial DJ Q*
Drums Of Death *Eight*
Frozen Modules Erotica Italia
Bill Frisell *Fred Frith Goldie*
Harmonia 76 *Larry Heard*
The High Llamas *Keith*
Jarrett Marc Johnson *Nusrat*
Fateh Ali Khan *Oliver*
Lake/Reggie Workman/
Andrew Cyrille *Legendary*
Deep Funk Vol 2 György
Ligeti *Lata Mangeshkar*
Messtime Roscoe Mitchell
The Nazgul *Oval Pantunes*
Music *Pere Ubu Pnu Rift*
Pyramid *Ernst Rejssager*
Robin Rimbaud *Roedelius*
Ryuichi Sakamoto *Shohe The*
Nations Silver Apples Sofa
Surfers *Sonic Youth/Jim*
O'Rourke *Subterranean Hitz*
Vol 2 Suicide Sun Ra Temple
Terre Thaemlitz *Tortoise*
Wingless Angels *Photoharu*
Yoshizawa *plus new*
compilations, classical,
critical beats, jazz and out
rock releases in brief

soundcheck

psychic, 20s gospel (*American Primitive*)
Label: honcho John Fahey has successfully
isolated the weird strain of raw, annoying
scotchness that marks great music (from Sun
Records through to Shannon Jackson and
Caroline Kraebel). Bassholes are right in the
thick of this anti-tradition.

On "Bald-Headed Woman Blues",
Howlin's guitar discovers an out-of-tune
string as brass and brains as by Rorschach's
"Sleepytime Blues" sounds like an out-take
from Iggy's *Kill City*: an audio abortion where
the bootleggers throw in the garbage. On
"Hissing Unleash", Lilash makes
Thunderbolts chaos walk again, while
"Candyman Blues" sucks better than The New
York Dolls. What a thing!

REN WATSON

John Cage

The Complete Cage Editions
Volume 15 *Later Works*
HOGE 55 CD

Despite the title, these works were not so
much lost as set aside. *A Chair With Cops* was
apparently written as a gift to Henry and
Sydney Cowell on their wedding anniversary,
no doubt intended as a specifically occasional
piece, rather than one for the canon. *Road And
Fences In The Academy* is a dance piece dated
July 1940, and its existence was unknown
until Cage presented it in 1992 to his
publisher Don Geeske. Cage died soon after,
and it is tempting to speculate that, aware of
how little time he had left, he was clearing out
his cupboard in an attempt at one-empting
the volumes of academia, knowing they would
be swooping on his friends, family, mailman
and orthodontist in the search for notes,
sketches, variants and doodles.

The main piece on the disc is *The City Wears A
Saucer Hat*. The text, by Kenneth Patchen, was
commissioned for broadcast in May 1942 in
CBS's Columbia Workshop slot. Under Mike
Wofford's art, the joining of members of
Esential Music is lumbering and wooden, and
Paul Schenck's lugubriously knowing realisation
of "The Voice" makes Forrestump sound like a
hyperactive character from a 30s screwball
comedy. While his pedestrian delivery is meant
to suggest a dream-like state or the numbing
effect of city life, as "The Voice" stumbles from
one odd encounter to the next, eventually
finding space on a rock out in the ocean from
where he portages, I think we're more lost
in the world. I am coming into your house with
my hand outstretched." 19 months earlier,
Charlie Chaplin's Jewish barber made a speech
with a similar thrust in *The Great Dictator*, and
is hooked to the day for his naive, sentimental
clips. Patchen, a card-carrying member of the
avant-garde, got away with it.

In 1942 Cage wrote what he "dreamed of
compact technological boxes, inside which all
audible sounds including noise would be ready
to come forth at the command of the
composer." When asked to provide the
accompaniment to Patchen's script, Cage had

Dock Boggs

Country Blues: Complete Early Recordings
(1927-29)

REVENANT RINGS CD

A moonshiner, gunslinger, outlaw and drunkard from a coal-mining town in the southern Blue Ridge Mountains where
Virginia, Tennessee and Kentucky meet, Dock Boggs was the
kind of man that Ma and Pa Walton warned John Boy about.
He was also one of the most unique musicians in a tradition
that places a premium on the singularity of the individual
voice. As Greil Marcus puts it in his mytho-poetic liner notes:
"Dock Boggs was a singer and banjo player who sounded as
if his bones were coming through his skin every time he
opened his mouth." Like his not too distant Appalachian
neighbours The Carter Family (the first family of Country
music), Boggs conjured up the howling ghosts of Anglo-
Celtic balladry and channelled them through the rhythmic
temperament of the blues to produce a music as unflinching
as his surroundings.

Boggs's music is intensely rhythmic, but it has the stark
intensity of a death knell, rather than the rollicking stomp
typically associated with the bango post-Deliverance. Unlike
the clawhammer bango style — the archetypal bluegrass
technique — perfected by Boggs's contemporary Buell
Kassee, in which the strings are strummed and thrashed with
the fingernails in a blaze of speed, Boggs played it like it was
a guitar in the hands of a Piedmont bluesman by picking out
each individual note with clarity and finesse. Where the
clawhammer style makes you want to hoot and holler, at its
best — "Pretty Polka", "Canville Girl", "Old Rub Alcohol
Blues", "Country Blues" — Boggs's picking sends a chill
through your bones (appropriately, the tuning that Boggs
used on "Country Blues" was called "the graveyard tuning"
by old time musicians).

The familiar demons of humiliation, loneliness, punishment,



loss of innocence and betrayal that seem to haunt the edges
of all folk songs are embodied here by Boggs's remarkable
voice, which is at once almost volitionally nasal and caught at
the back of his throat like he was forcing some horrible truth
back inside his body. The uniqueness of his jarringly primal
sound can be heard in comparison to the two "high
lonesome" tracks by Bill Shepherd included at the end of the
disc, which were recorded around the same time as Boggs
was active.

In an interview in *The Wire* 167, Matt Klarman said, "How
shallow American pop music sounds compared to the
chanting of Oum Kalthoum or a raga by Anurag Khan!" This
latest exquisite release from John Fahey's Revenant, the
best record label in the world, is as strong a refutation of that
statement as you're ever likely to hear.

PETER SHAPIRO

sein an opportunity to develop his ideas for
blurring the distinction between modern music
and sound effects. The engineer told
Cage that anything was possible, and the
composer took him at his word. I wrote 250
pages for instruments, the timbre, loudness
and relative pitch of which I described, but the
existence of which I only guessed." The score
was, predictably, pronounced unplayable, and
Cage had to produce a substitute in well under
a week. It is that revision, hobbled, grounded,
limited by practical reality, which was
discovered in the basement of a New York
public library and is used here. Cage must have
felt like he'd been asked to reproduce
Albert Einstein with only a tin opener and a
toaster. With rare exceptions ("Open Up The Sky"
and "Oh The Queen"), where he is freed from
the need to support or illustrate specific events
and dialogue, the result is ploddingly linear.

I suspect Cage would have preferred that
these pages had stayed in the vaults. He did
attend and, apparently, approve
performances, but, as Rachel Hostetler observes,
"Cage's famous equanimity and acceptance

should not be confused with aesthetic
endorsement." Though *Road And Fences* has a
good deal of wit and charm, none of these
works has much going for it beyond historical
interest.

BARRY WITHERDEN

Circadian Rhythms

Internal Clock
LANGUAGE WOODEN CD

Buckfunk 3000

First Class Ticket To Telos
LANGUAGE WOODSTOCK CD

Founded by Tony Thrane of 400
Blows/Poorly Bored fame, Language is one of
the most eclectic and interesting of the UK's
underground dance labels. So expectations
ride high for this pair of releases from The
Host veteran Charles (Bullen) and electronic
wunderkind Si Begg.

Bullen's *Circadian Rhythms* play a stoned
cocktail of jazz, World Music and the odd bit of

electronic twiddling. All too often Bullen comes
up against the common problem of what to do
with a bunch of live musicians — here
including live improviser Jean James and
House On Mars drummer Jean-Dominique
Nash — when you put them in a room full of
sequencers. At its worst it comes across as a
politely comradely jazz fusion workout,
elsewhere it sounds like a bunch of musicians
jamming uncertainly over a Techno CD. It's not
all bad, though. *ALFA* is reminiscent of a low
volume version of Black Dog's electronic
Orchestration. But most promising is
"Timescancer", whose staccato Junglims
inspire the musicians into new forms of playing.

Over the last 12 months, Si Begg has
established himself as one of UK Techno's
most intriguing and maverick new producers.
Like Aphex Twin, his music seems more
inspired by a childlike sense of play than an
adult artist's furnished brow. Similarly, his work
is idiosyncratic enough to escape most forms
of categorisation. But where the *Twins* system's
music harks back to the rustic environment of
his childhood, Begg's work comes out of the

cut 'y' paste kindergarten of beatbox culture and vintage video games. Typical of the strangely elastic groove of "Fried Funk And Microchips," where disco samples, electro hooks and a sequence of chaotic, exploding breaks fight for attention in the mix. Elsewhere the music sounds like Arthur Baker's pioneering electronics merged to the rhythmic complexity of Phuture, while the bouncing double-speed beats and stylized and fuzzy rave Techno basses of "Panic Button" sound like an arcade take on Happy Hardcore.

That the disc begins to run out of breath a while before the closing elegiac title track of "Feedback" is no surprise: the energy and variety of ideas evident here is truly astonishing.

PINE SHALLCROSS

Coil

Time Machines

ESKASON 010 CD

Zoe Kea/Coil

Transparent

THRESHOLD HOUR 00013 CD

Coil's ultimate plan, according to founder John Balance, is to set up a performance piece that would play continuously for a week. Loosely based on La Monte Young and Marian Zazezeli's Dream House concept, where a single drone is extended to last for eternity, their aim is to change the perception of time through their music.

Time Machines is the first phase of this idea, a series of four electronically induced tones, each branded with the pharmaceutical name of some mind altering drug and designed to "facilitate travel through time." Coil think of drugs as "tiny time machines" which extend the user's perception of time to allow access to other dimensions. By staring at the black oval printed on the cover and closing your eyes while playing the CD, the coloured after-image that eventually materialises should be, according to Balance, seen as a magical gateway for the listener to slip through. How effective this will prove to be for those unfamiliar with the complex and intricate Golden Dawn system of magic (from which this theory has apparently been borrowed) is open to speculation. But the tones alone provide a vivid sense of aural hallucination that uncouples the subconscious from its cranial mooring pad and allows it to float away into space. *Time Machines* may have its roots in La Monte Young, but to those ears it seems more Kosmische inspired in style and presentation — except it's one giant step beyond.

The bulk of the live recordings on *Transparent* travel back in time to witness some of Coil's earliest "trusty poetry" incantations, where they merged with extreme music. John Gossling's Zoe Kea to play Brian's final Festival in 1983. Although its raw passion and deliberate brutality may fly, Coil's present standards, sound somewhat dated and clumsy (complete with tiling

speak word backdrops of Alexter Crowley and Charles Manson), it has lost none of its power to excite and disturb. This release captures the experience of being whisked back to an 80s gig that sounds as though it is being performed on the rim of an active volcano. It suggests that Coil had down the true secret of time travel years ago.

EDWIN POUNCEY

Ornette Coleman

Virgin Beauty

COLU88A 489433 CD

Hanns Eisler once defined polyphony as, more or less, everybody shouting at once, each one trying to convince the others that he is right. Superficially, Ornette Coleman's Harmolodic method bears out Eisler's mocking definition, but a closer listen reveals Coleman's democratic vision to be far more than a parliamentary muddling match. Ascribing equal weight to both the players and their roles, rhythm, melody and beat merge into fiery, formless, symbols of sound, kept in orbit by the instrumentalists' flutter-bongueing the air around them. Though his alto is certainly the lead instrument, he doesn't so much solo as shadow the soprano's Harmolodic trajectory, holding it online in the same way you might guide a hoop that's up and rolling.

When it was first released in 1968, *Virgin Beauty* drew scorn from Coleman's more hardcore admirers for closing to what they the likes of me: who only packed up on this release out of curiosity to hear *Grateful Dead* guitarist Jerry Garcia in a different setting the gamely adapts to Harmolodics' tighter demands, and who had otherwise lost interest in Coleman after his orchestral *Sies Of America* forgo on London's South Bank; the question of his selling out jazz is not an issue. *Virgin Beauty* argues that Coleman and the funk were chasing a common cause: creating motion. The disc's more supple dance rhythms not only buff the edgy angularities of his Harmolodic, they also ease out the melodies he evolves from them. And whatever the tempo, funkage feels the rhythmic patterns articulated by the doubled-up rhythm section and guitars, so it only sounds like they're about to trip over each other all the time (but never do).

The opening track, "Wishes," is as joyous as a first encounter with the massed guitars of King Sunny Ade. Now it's been freed up by the funk, Coleman seems just as eager to try out Harmolodics on other American styles. "Happy Hour" is as absurdly exuberant as a rockabilly combo on a party train rattling through the night, and throughout the disc occasional Country blues inflections emotionally shade Coleman's play. Like *The Music*, shades a little too close to sentimentality when he switches to trumpets — though his tone is less sure, its shivers nevertheless climax well with the blousy requirements of a ballad like "Chanting." If, first time round, the disc's detractors' dimmed

such moments for dimming jazz somehow, today a great American pop album blows through those same gashes of vulgarity.

BIBA KOPF

Holger Czuyak

Movies

SP00N 35 CD

Holger Czuyak

On The Way To The Peak Of

Normal

SP00N 36 CD

Last year's over-discussed *Sonjörg* — ineffectual remixes of Can's greatest hits — was a variation on a theme that had preoccupied the group themselves for much of their career. Having established a few seductively workable blueprints, Can spent years recycling the same handful of motifs in an effort to produce both quintessential rock monuments and (we all have to eat) the occasional, elusive pop hit. Fine for a few energized years, but after the departure of Demo Suzuki and the purchase of multi-track machinery, things took a turn for the worse. The machine's game way to the misfortune, and the music confirmed the presentiment of some of their earliest critics — John Peel — that Can was a group of flashes of brilliance rather than substance. Too often in their so-called critically underestimated late period (from *Son Of Babylon* onwards, but especially after Holger Czuyak had hung up his white ludgloves and relinquished his probing bass, the whole remained tantalizingly less than the often exquisite ports suggested. By the time they split up, sloppy tyros like PIL and The Fall were springing out better, if musically less adept, yet certainly more passionate pastiches of Can than Can themselves. *Movies* acts as a footnote to this earthbound trajectory and recovers some of the lost momentum.

A flawed masterpiece painstakingly constructed and edited at home and in the studio over a couple of years from multiple sources. *Movies* aimed, Czuyak's all too brief sleeve-note explains, to find out "how the different works of film and radio could meet in a place of music as if they would have belonged together from the very beginning." Though devoid of the pop-art savvy of Saint-Denis, 1977 media-overload bintzy *Future Games*, and lacking Keith Rowe's intuitive feel for the explosively uncouth in his playing with A.M.T., Czuyak's use of found sounds is nevertheless meticulous and suggestive. The elaborate "Hollywood Symphony" is both a homage to the contemporary movie industry (shades of "Bel Air") in the way it utilizes its techniques the distorted perspective and tracking shots of the mind which accompany or replace the external dialogue of many a would-be auteur. It's a carefully constructed, macabre work of designer sounds in which are embedded the outpourings of mess media training for creativity, but which is restricted framed by Czuyak's fascination with form. "Oh Lord Give Us More Money" features Karol Schmetz and

title	words	vinyl	cd
2x 16" case, vinyl edition: loop edition / germany / + extra mixes			
remixed: material: techno: loop edition / germany / 12" ma			
electronic, vinyl: material: techno: loop edition / germany / + extra mixes			
abstract: hypnosis: digital: loop edition / germany / + extra mixes			
1982 live performed and recorded in new york / usa / + extra mixes			



reunited: material: techno: loop edition / germany / + extra mixes

germany / + extra mixes

germany / + extra mixes

germany / + extra mixes



Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan
En Concert À Paris*

OCCE/RADIO FRANCE (570500 5x00)

The unaccompanied voice offers such expressive possibility, I sometimes wonder why humanity ever thought instruments were necessary; or, on the other hand, why singing isn't our natural vocal mode. "If you can't sing it, don't say it" might be a workable dictum (then I hear my own singing voice, and think again).

There are plenty of musics for which the voice is secondary, even irrelevant, and of course instruments offer an extension of expressivity beyond the capability of the vocalist alone, to say nothing of the social extension achieved when singers and instrumentalists work together. There are few voices more capaciously expressive than that of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, the great qawwal singer who died last August, but even he must can scarcely be imagined without the 'party' that accompanied him: a choir of several singers, including one soloist, his brother Faruqi, not much short of a virtuoso himself; a tabla player and one or two harmonium players (sometimes Nusrat himself).

The 'party' serves to a more or less conventional, though minutely attentive, accompaniment, but it's also an expression of community, a social event under the auspices of the Sufism to which *qawwali* gives voice. In live performance, as on this set, that social event embraces the audience, which in some not easily-definable way becomes something other than the passive, paying recipient that it is, for better or worse, the dominant Western model. I remember seeing Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan at the Barbican in London, and the audience's behaviour, before the music began, was so disruptive of the norms of concert hall life that an onstage announcer had to ask for peace and quiet so the performance could get under way.

These five CDs add up to nearly six hours of music, and not the least remarkable thing about them is that they were recorded at concerts in Paris over three days only: the first two concerts on the same day in 1985, volumes three to five at concerts spanning two days in 1988. This is music of inspiration, but here you don't hang around waiting for the inspiration; you just get up and go, for hours on end. In this context, 'Inspiration' takes us back to the world's original series.

breathe in the moment, breathe out the music, which is the moment's natural expression. Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan was capable of a stunning range of vocalisms, some of them taking the voice to a point where it all but ceases to be musical in any conventional Western sense. Taken out of context, some of his strangled cries would be taken for yelps of pain, but they push the music to ever greater fervour, ever greater embellishment. That apparently infinite capacity for vocal decoration is what sets him apart. Sometimes the decorations are musical figures as delicate as any baroque opera singer might manage; at other times they're explosively percussive scats, nonsense syllables I assume, that serve to quicken the pulse both of the music, and of his listeners.

The music can't be separated from the Sufi beliefs out of which it grows, but its power clearly derives from something else, a physicality (and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan was a hugely physical presence) in which, almost paradoxically, its mysticism has its foundations. The booklets accompanying this set include either summaries, or line-by-line translations of the texts, and that's commendable, but it doesn't actually add much to the force of what we hear to know that what's being sung are lines like 'If you *yo*g comes to my house, I will devote myself to him'. That's not to suggest that the words mean nothing; they clearly do to the performers, and that's what gives the performance its ability to communicate beyond the simply verbal.

These CDs have been available separately before, and Occara can't be accused of overpadding for this reissue, but it's the music that counts. Although, or because, it was produced in two concentrated bursts, it's remarkably powerful, and sustains its power through 340 minutes. Not everyone will want that much qawwali, and the best of Nasrullah Ali Khan may be on Real World, or on the Shanachie reissues of work recorded for Sovereign Sirocco in Pakistan, but this set is a monument to a musician like no other. Or will Farukh Faiz Ali Khan step into the limelight and prove himself every bit as talented as his brother?

NICK KIMBLEY

Leiberet and is as engaging as anything on Can's last half dozen albums. But if it seems clear of the MOR romanticism to which Can eventually succumbed, it (and the more outlandish pop ditty "Cool in the Pool") nevertheless shores Can's post-Demo predilection for bombast, vaporous lines, and camp vocalizations.

Meanwhile, the later solo album *On the Way* (from 1981) is six pieces of middle-aged music, serious to the point of lugubriousness, drifting and hanging in the air like scent or cigarette smoke, pregnant with memories of better, harsher times now viewed through the gelatinous tears of an overwrought whimsy. A slight and comparatively unfocused work, it heralds Czajka's forays into the folkies of haute couture (ironically, its cover stock-

drawing was taken up as a logo by a Japanese designer) and leaves one gently exasperated by its lack of genuine vision.

ED BANTON

Delta T

Lost Ark:

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Pnu Riff

Between The Dawns
HOURS: 10:30 - 1:00

Since 1994, prolific producer Max Brenner's line of Wight-based Holixac label has pioneered a full-kiln funk of raisable polyethylenes and

metallophonic timbres which debauches groove around the drums and thus avoids the oppressive weight of so much mainstream music inspired by the Mo'Nasty/Tune/Jazz Fusion/Punk Recordings/Pussy/Cat and Releasing CDs under alter egos such as Universal Being and Freeless AZM. Holistic really only hit its stride late 2011 with Brennan and friends' *Brilliant Mawzee House* (a project on Peacock). Both the quartet Delta Z and Phu Riff (a 19-year-old multi-instrumentalist and Phil Butler and Brennan proteges striking out on debut albums

While Delta T's *Lost Arks* never reaches the palmist peaks and implied rhythms of *Moscow House* & gems like "Mid Heaven Express" or "Finger Movement One: Butler

(who drummed on that album) scores through his arrangements. Thanks to a strikingly turgid reggae downbeat, Delta 1 stay resolutely earthbound, only seducing with the title track's limber boss and the final "Bush Communication", which dapples the ear with its chiming transient tones and finger-plucked guitar ripples.

Between The Downs hits a power spot straight off with "Comely Clut", which features swooping orchestral attacks, loping double bass gallop and a three-note celeste refrain full of maritime exuberance. Butler revisits this mood of muted exaltation with the foghorn fanfares and glockenspiel nift of "Heavenly Trump" (sampled orchestral brass functioning as a rhythmic-side engine).

Throughout the CD, the bass forsakes low end pressure to act as what one track calls a "bumpy slide," cushioning and pushing the heavier by turns. On "Bhagawater," dolorous trumpet drift becomes rhythm in a sizzling energy. "Bumpy Slide" itself has the descending chords and false endings of a basement Tortoise study minus the surfing on shorelines. Like the fretless underdog of Manchester's Jumper, Phu Riff has found a way to put the brakes on breaks while avoiding the rhythmic ruckus that usually ensues. Between The Downs opens a shiver inside rhythm, a harbour inside an ongoing groove that crackles and rocks reciprocally.

KODWO ESHIM

Drums Of Death

AWANT KANIGBO CD

A record on the John Zorn-related Japanese Avant label Utsuri Drums Of Death, with a cover depicting a paint-daubed witchdoctor type holding a knife to his chest. It's just got to be more apocalyptic culture: Sotikwone, death-Ambient, cyber-jazz savagery.

Actually, Drums Of Death is whole lot scarier. It brings together field recordings made in Ghana in November 1996 by Mark Seidenfeld, specifically of funeral drum music. As Seidenfeld points out in his short but engaging sleeve notes, Ghana has a historically high death rate and the funeral rituals its various tribes have developed as a result are as richly stylized as they are grisly.

Seidenfeld has recorded two "performances" an itinerant group drawn from the Ashante tribe of central Ghana and a larger ritual performed in a village of the Ewe tribe, which is based in the Volta region, involving seven drummers and a host of village women singing and adding supplementary rhythms on wooden clappers. The entire album is interesting, but the Ewe music is the most affecting (though affecting is a far too polite word to describe its impact). The slave trade made frequent raids on the Ewe people, thus the influence of their funeral music found its way into Haitian voodoo ceremonies. The music here evokes similar trance states, in an attempt to turn grief into transcendence. Seidenfeld writes: "The only way to record the ceremonies is to become a participant. Drink the gin that opens a door." He has plainly done so, for the record offers a real sense of being there.

We're all familiar with the indomitable use of words like tribal and trance with regard to the most exotic of Western music. Drums Of Death illustrates the true meaning of the terms in its cyclic, spiraling rhythms that are emotionally untinged and physically unrestrained, equally so deservingly lacking in those contemporary First World musics that claim them as an influence.

SHIMON HOPKINS

Eight Frozen Modules

The Confused Electronic
CITY MUSIC EM494995 CD LP

The Confused Electronic explores a variety of end-of-the-millennium resonances. Though nicely articulated, it is hardly breaking new ground. As its solo writer, producer and bassist-performer Ken Gibson—a protégé of former Butthole Surfers' King Coffey—succeeds in crystallizing those all-too-easy creative options for boys with sampling toys into concise urban vignettes, travel brochure verbiage and picture postcard sonnets for inward looking modern metropolises.

Imagine walking down a city street, edging between roadworks and car tyres whooshing through puddled rain. You're leaning to Hiedegard Von Bingen on a wallforn. Now intensify all these sounds, strip them down to basics, and amplify. This is "The New Sensibility." Most other acts are more straightforward. "Short Dub 2" bears out its title, while "White Mud Arise" pays homage to Sly Brown's Valiente's electronegative guitar distortion. Elsewhere, caustic beats punch out wind tunnel atmospheres, down with high tonalities whiz, while exterior dissonances threaten intrusion.

By contrast, the closing "Under The Palace" ventures with little conviction into drum 'n' bass, in what has already become a trite and commonplace gesture to modernism. Still, Gibson has a bass sound almost appropriate in grief to Jan Wobbe's, if lacking an essential individuality, and he does sometimes evoke the percussive sound of flesh and blood laying into industrial detritus with metronomic abandon, which is always a pleasure.

TIM OWEN

Bill Frisell

Come Like A Train
MONSIEUR 79473 CD

Mark Johnson

The Sound Of Summer Running
WAVE 540575 CD

As well as fronting his own CD, Bill Frisell also plays on bassist Mark Johnson's album in a line-up completed by Pat Metheny and Joey Baron. The good news first, on the evidence of the Johnson disc: Frisell hasn't completely lost it. Performing with Metheny for the first time they run through Johnson's insouciously seductive set of rock-inflected jazz compositions, which negotiate some odd but plausible chord sequences. Frisell and Metheny mesh well, mixing a similar strain of nostalgia—the whole thing has an easy unfurled feel to it. On "Summer Running," for example, the group reveals subtle combinations which, despite the album's superficial gloss of urbanity taken to an extreme, are full of rich possibilities. "The Advantages Of Max And Ben" follows a strange logic, and is much enhanced by what must be Metheny's "42-string pikasso guitar."

The harmonies that run through the opening "Faith In You" are deeply satisfying. Johnson himself is an unobtrusive but propulsive presence and Baron is his tongue-in-cheek self. It doesn't always work, however, and music this urbane easily slips into blandness. I Dring-Dong Dief" (as the title might suggest is unpleasantly pompous). But this is on the whole a crafty set of compositions, persuasively played.

The Frisell album, by contrast, comes as a mighty disappointment. It gets off to a gliding start with "Blues For Los Angeles" and doesn't escape the introverted American romanticism that has become Frisell's trademark. The wit and surprise of his music seems to have receded into the background. There is plenty of warmth to these curiously recent live performances, but the trajectory in Frisell's work seems to be from folk to folky, from sentiment to sentimentality. There's a lot of soft-leftish shuffling going on here, those gay, thick noses still pour from his fingers, but they're not going anywhere in particular. Truly rocking. As in rocking chair.

WILL HENEGHERY

Fred Frith

The Previous Evening
RECOMMENDED REP 1 CD

The music on The Previous Evening commissioned by Alvin Miller, has already served as music for dance, but the alternative identities of its three parts: 1. Homunculi, 2. Antique and 3. Trip To The Moon seem secondary to the fact that they comprise a three-part homage to major composers of the New York School.

The first piece honours John Cage. Starting from laughter, it incorporates snippets of text and culls phrases from Werner Barzsch's performances on piano and prepared piano, while installing the obligatory blocks of silence and concocting some fine instances of simultaneity. Chrsian Kaya's clarinet playing weaves purposefully through the collage. Audible in the mix is electric guitar being sounded with ping-pong balls, a welcome reminder of Fred Frith at work.

Chopping bow strokes and irregular plucking on the violin bear his signature in the homage to Earle Brown which integrates fragments of Schumann and Mozart. Clarinet and two percussion assist Frith in generating an elegant mobile structure.

The central section, dedicated to Morton Feldman, is a predictably sparse, contemplative piece, with minimal yet striking embellishments from the clarinet and percussion. It's pretty enough, but arguably tells too much under the influence. That there are so many excellent recordings of Feldman's music now available, and so few hours in the day to listen to them adequately, prompts the ungenerous, but eminently practical question: why listen to Frith's homage instead of say Roger Woodward performing Alvin?

To a certain extent you could apply that

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soundcheck

query to the CD as a whole. The success of a musical forage, whether it be Gavin Bryars remembering Scott LaFaro, or Charles Gayle touching on Coltrane, depends upon a combination of appropriate allusiveness with the distinctive voice of the performer or composer who is paying tribute. Otherwise, why not listen to the real thing instead? In this case, that doesn't only mean the subjects of Firth's tribute, but also his own distinctive and memorable *Guitar Solo* or *The Technology Of Years* albums.

JULIAN COWLEY

Goldie

Saturne Return
LONDON 1999 2002CUP

Intense media scrutiny and good music rarely go hand in hand. When translated to music, the pathological distrust that a "farger than life" character develops from being in the spotlight takes on a hideous grandeur. This, of course, is exactly exacerbated when combined with the inevitable paranoia of the fall-out from too much participation in a drug-based sub-culture. In Goldie's hands, their combine in such a way that the torment of the artist assumes world-historical importance.

Saturne Return is a garishly mish-mash combination of Sly Stone brooding over his fame in *There's A Riot Goin' On*, the grimal swain catharsis of John Lennon's *Plastic Ono Band* and the uncanny exorcism of the good life from Sayo Giza's *Cooling The Sun* inside. It's the fusion factor, not the addressless drop of "Temper Temper", KRS-One actually recording "Representing like the Internet" with a straight face on "Digital", or the sickly moon of David Bowie's vocals on "Truth", that pushes *Saturne Return* into the abyss occupied by *Big Doyl* or *Autobahn* and *Hanging With Shit Elvis On Stage*. The Sade-meets-Shakira school of "Believe" feels like Goldie's bid for MOR arpy in the States, while "Dragonfly" might as well be Lenny White jamming with Hubert Laws.

For producers like Goldie and (LT) Burren, fusion offers the illusion that you can be completely wrapped up in the intricacies of machines or technique and still groove, it represents a fustian bargain between virtuosity and fun. Unfortunately, that people took fusion's romantic imagination seriously and disguised it in the cloak of skill and speed also permits its Jungles followers to induce their flights of fancy without fear of laughter from the genre's hard men. Far more frightening than any derisive, post-industrialist dystopia Goldie might compare up with his sampler and collection of Joey Berrin records is that first glance at the track listing of *Saturne Return* and seeing "Mother" abiding in at 50 minutes and 13 seconds. To be fair, "Mother," which bears a strong similarity to Gertrude, isn't nearly as bad as it could have been, and the "Buffalo Gals" punctuation of "It Be There For You" is his

most novel device in a long time. Nonetheless, *Saturne Return* is crazy wack. G-Man, get over yourself!

PETER SHAFER

Harmonia 76

Tracks And Traces
SONY 54 48855 CD

Roedelius

Aguaresolo
ALL SAINTS ASC395 CD

Tracks And Traces bears the fruits of a not so chance meeting between Brian Eno and Harmonia, the group formed by Neu! guitarist Michael Rother with Clavier's Dieter Moebius and Hans-Joachim Roedelius. The reason these recordings are only now seeing the light of day is, according to Rother, because the participants never intended to make a record in the first place. It didn't help that, technically, Harmonia (who released two albums on the German label Brain) had already split up anyway.

As a sketchbook of ideas, *Tracks And Traces* is interesting, but the intuitive improvised feeling is very much the result of a tentative first meeting. "By The Riverside," for example, is just out. With no atmosphere to speak of, it must rely on a basic, repetitive pattern that runs out of inspiration way before its nine minutes are up. As someone because opaque music doesn't have to mean having no sense of purpose. Well, OK, at the time Eno was promoting Ambient as a music that didn't make any demands on the listener, but ironically almost all of the music he made to illustrate the point had a strong presence. And Clavier too usually managed to nail even the most vague statements with a reason for being.

Compared to his vocal efforts on the far better collaborations *Cluster And Eno* and *After The Heat*, Eno's singing on "Lundberg Heist" sounds tentative and unsure of itself. Neither does "Wind Dream" realize its initial spoken promise. But "Sometimes In Autumn," though the longest and most amorphous track, conjures a beautifully bleak landscape, with Rother's delay guitar taking across vast space. The album closes with two 90-second miniatures, "When Shade Was Born" and "Trace," that are so evocative you're left asking why they don't go on longer.

On the subject of canons, Hans-Joachim Roedelius's *Aguaresolo* has 15 of them. In keeping with the album title, they're unashamedly past. Roedelius's synth is a constant, though they don't exactly dominate, and Nicola Aron is a fine foil on saxophone, although his seagull calls against the synthetic wave beats of "Alone" are plain corn. A low key, likable album, and if that sounds like damning it with faint praise, that's because I'd like to hear more of Roedelius's genius. For *Aguaresolo*'s most sublime moments are those chosen in mood to Sade or Debussy's *Etudes*. I could quite happily listen to an entire Roedelius album in this vein.

PIKE BARNES

Larry Heard

Dance 2000
DISTANCE 512643 494532 CD/2LP

DJ Q

Face The Music
FILTER 19704 CD/2LP

If these are to be Larry Heard's final recordings, then they serve very well as both a tribute to his immense talent and as a summary trip through his recording career. There are a number of tracks here that would sit comfortably with many of Heard's other works. The tubular bass sound of "Dancefloor Seduction" recalls the future shock of his proto-Acid classic, "Washing Machine," the expansive, choral keyboards, evocative in a number of tracks, particularly "Hydrogenation," hark back to the weightless majesty of his previous Allen UP, even the vocal number, "I Know It's You," evokes memories of his unhappy liaison with MCA, which resulted in the *Introduction* and *Back To Love* albums. What seems to hold all these disparate tracks together is a sense of melancholy. Heard's struggles with depression have been little documented, but the evidence is there in the music, the basslines that seem almost weighed down as they stroll across "My Primitive Nature," then threaten to drag down the more kinetic beats of "Pleasure Island." It's a mindset that's always been at odds with the more hedonistic attitude of most House producers, but this counterpart is what set Heard apart from and above the majority of his peers. His music was always more interested in engaging the mind and the heart than the feet. The result was often tension, but such a beautiful tension.

Hedonism, or, more accurately, exuberance is definitely the name of the game for Paul Fynn, aka DJ Q, man of the moment on the UK House scene. The dancing vibes of "Space Dance" seem to wrap up of the mix, straining to break free, while the music of "Tracking" threatens to stumble over itself in its frantic attempts to keep moving. But House tries to position itself as a descendant of jazz (as if piano solo + linear beat = jazz), and Fynn falls victim to this misconception on "Gisgog's Jazz" (for piano, read trumpet). But for the most part, the obvious inclusion on display is Carl Craig's Paperclip People. Like Craig, Fynn builds his tracks on huge strutting basslines and a rough trippy sound where effects, filters and EQ manipulation run rampant. And like Craig, he's not afraid to make the results less than pretty. The abrasive unswirls of "Baroness Impulse" are as jarring as Craig's classic "Occultation." Fynn's belief in the power of House music is almost evangelical, versus the missionary zeal of William Miller's poetry on "We Are One." If he continues to make music as uplifting as this, he should win many more converts.

PETER PHINNEY

The High Llamas

Cold And Bouncy
ALFACAD 45013 CD/2LP

High Llamas founder Sean O'Hagan — sometime Stereolab collaborator and Boo Radleys member — was one part of Hérodisia, a group whose ethic, they once explored, was the feeling of buying Pet Sounds and the first Clash album on the same day. They were the classier, jangly and jangly with O'Hagan's breezy West Coast pop approach pitched in prime tension against Cathal Gough's belligerent guitars, resulting in an often perplexing but always moving rory. When they went their separate ways — Coughlan's the sometimes illusive Fátima Mórison, while O'Hagan dived The High Llamas as a first solo record — each part seemed distinctly depleted by the lack of its balancing other.

Both men are probably sick to death of people forever invoking their past, but memories of the Hérodisia Coughlan and its sugared yin-yang still echo in The High Llamas. The concept is so individual that I only wish I could truly like the group, rather than simply admire the seamlessness of its weddings. O'Hagan's current work still maintains something of the old work ethic, but now lives in danger of subverting its own sweetness — ironically enough, all the more so as it tends to increasing sophistication and to resemble a conceptual art. From 1990 on, O'Hagan was one of the first to vindicate those supposedly MOR names that indie pop orthodoxy rejected. Jimmy Webb, Van Dyke Parks, Andrew Gold, Bart Bacharach. The High Llamas' postiche blendings were not so much crafted as knowingly overcast into a first at odds with the majority of low budget UK pop, as if someone had made an MGM musical on Channel 4 prices (The *Golden Eye* album cost only £2000 to record).

But for all its gloss, *Cold And Bouncy* seems strangely half-hearted, and not just because of the pelt of O'Hagan's vocals. If this were a novel, you'd marvel at the crafted brilliance of individual sentences but wonder why the paragraphs don't hold up.

For the record, they've moved slightly away from their Beach Boys influences — allegedly because of a disliking encounter with the Wilson clan — despite a preponderance of songs straight of "Ambrosence." The Llamas opt for a more electronic approach that brings the tone closer to the Bridge Nine-in-Gully McGowan drag of Stereolab. Some of the hooks like "Partners Part," you may find difficult to disengage from your mind, not so much for the distinctiveness, but for the way they tap into pop archetypes. But there's a reason, even to this elegant music, and perhaps that missing center is a lack of conviction. It feels like a meticulously worked out crossword puzzle of a record, and like a crossword, looks in on itself when you've worked through it.

JONATHAN ROBERTS

Keith Jarrett

The Impulse! Years (1973-74)
PULSE-11905 231 \$420

The Impulse! Years (1973-74) forms the nucleus to an earlier box set, *Masters: The Impulse! Years 1975-76*. Keith collects works by Jarrett's American Quartet, comprising saxophonist Dewey Redman, bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Paul Motian. The highlight of this collection is undoubtedly the extra disc's worth of material from the Fort Yawuh live session, recorded over four sets at the Village Vanguard in February 1973. In comparison to the following studio dates which occasionally sacrifice energy and spontaneity for a particular compositional identity or approach to ensemble, the music from Fort Yawuh is gritty and glorious and more freely experimental. Sometimes the music follows a relatively straight vamp-solo-vamp sequence, relatively straight, because the tendency is exemplified by the superb Ornette-influenced "If That Wasn't (Was It)" but what soloist? "Miles" sees Jarrett in full flight, pushing Redman to seek a similar level of intensity through ferocious squalls of overblowing. Jarrett never surrenders his stamp of authority for long, however, and he insists that the distinctive individuals making up the quartet should submit to the demands of the group.

The extra material from the date comprises an entire disc: the compiles having decided to restore some performances on the original to their full length, but otherwise to maintain the sequencing of the original release. The second disc features some great saxophone solos from Jarrett in a restored version of "Roads Travelled Roads Veiled", previously only available in truncated form on an Impulse! sampler as well as one of his infamous in-studio lectures on audience etiquette.

The first studio album, *Treasure Island* was recorded almost exactly one year later and adds a second performer to Guillermo Franco, plus jazz guitarist Sam Brown to the line-up. Brown brings an unfortunate saccharine touch, which also serves to underline the whimsical qualities often latent in Jarrett's themes. Given that Redman is also kept, with notable brief excursions, on a pretty high level, the overall effect is much less immediately processing. Jarrett, Haden and Motian are still able to whip up occasional moments of precise abstraction but interlarded as they are with episodes of pastoral jazz rock, these moments are more reminders of more astirring glories. Redman, however, imbues a previously unrelaxed version of "Death And The Flower" with an affecting pliancy.

That tune is refined as the title track of one of two albums — the other being *Bookends*, recorded six months later in October '74 with Franco succeeding Redman as sole percussionist. The latter "Death And The Flower" evolves from a long improvisation introduction with Jarrett on wood flute through a driving swing section, into a nimble



Ryuchi Sakamoto

Discoid
SONY CLASSICAL SKCJ321 CD

The connections pianist and composer Ryuchi Sakamoto assimilates in his writing seem limitless. "Domestic Japanese pop music sounds like Arabic music to me... in my mind Beethoven is New York," he says. His miraculous crosswiring of Techno, Ambient, contemporary classical and World Music repudiates any suggestion that he's a stylistic chameleon. But then there seems to be a truly "unethnik" environment in post-war Japan, contrasting with Western cultural tourism implicit in the World Music genre. Sakamoto has worked with a gamut of artists from Youssou N'Dour to J-pop, though probably his best-

known music is the soundtrack to Nagisa Oshima's POW film *Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence*, in which he also costarred alongside David Bowie. But his core achievement has been Yellow Magic Orchestra, founded with Haruomi Hosono and Yukihiko Takahashi in 1978 (see Hosono article, *The Wire* 162). A continuation of YMO is The Orchestra, led by Funkin' Muro Shinzaki, that performs on *Discoid* — together with DJ Sooky, David Tom and Sakamoto himself. Confusingly, though the CD is called *Discoid*, the orchestral work on it is *Untitled 01*.

The composition is Sakamoto's response to news coverage of starvation in Africa. Analyse the opening of "Grief" and you get a Japanese-sounding melody on strings against an orchestral backdrop surprisingly like Arvo Pärt's "tintinnabuli" style. But it works without any suggestion of incongruity. Ambient stylings are brutally suppressed on the second movement, "Anger", a noise barrage of real ferocity — it's already a remix on *Ninja Tune*. Bucolic oboe creates a limpid calm after the storm on "Prayer". "Salvation" mixes verbal responses to the question "What does salvation mean to you?" from Laurie Anderson, David Tom and others — this does break the tension — while the haunting opening theme gradually re-emerges on flute. It evolves into something close to English pastoralism — Vaughan Williams or Tippett — before merging with elements of "Anger" in a powerful climax that emphasises the work's integration.

Sakamoto has a multimedia career — as actor, celebrity model and fashion designer as well as composer — and *Discoid* offers a multimedia experience, with an enhanced audio/video track on the CD and a Website hyperlink. But his music stands without visual enhancement, haunting and evocative, expressing the open pluralism of contemporary Japanese music.

ANDY HAMILTON

piano interpretation. It's a breathtaking demonstration of the subtle complexities of compositional design. Jarrett claims more of the centre-stage here, with Motian particularly audible, but it's arguably the finest composition of the set.

The remaining tracks from the October '74 session, gathered together on *Bookends*, are more diffuse. "Inflight" fairly tumbles along, while "Kauai" is a lively acoustic percussion piece for Jarrett's wood flute and Redman's saxophone, with some intriguing extended techniques from Haden. The disc closes with Jarrett's previously unreleased solo version of Motian's "Victory", ably aided with aching piano/rhythm fragility.

TIM OWEN

György Ligeti

Chamber Music
SONY CLASSICAL SKCJ321 CD

The seventh volume in Sony's *Legato Edition* series, this comprises *Two For Violin*, *Hum And Pano* (1962), *Ten Pieces For Wind Quartet* (1968), *Six Bagatelles For Wind Quartet* (1953) and *Sonata For Solo Violin* (1994).

If not famous for *Lux Aeterna* a piece of mind-blowing textual innovation used by Stanley Kubrick in 2001, A Space Odyssey, Ligeti is capable of introspection. When the Adèle Ensemble played his early 70s compositions at the Huddersfield Festival in 1993, the results were electrifying. However he's also an opportunist. Lacking the rigour of a Boulez, Nono or Ferneyhough — the extravagant modernisms associated with the biennial summer school at Darmstadt — Ligeti has dived with the postmodernists, in 1982 he "decided to stop playing the cros game". In other words, for Ligeti what drove contemporary music into realms deemed unworkable was not a structural problem to do with bourgeois institutions and the industrialisation of culture — but a will "game" a whim. So in the 50s Ligeti writes melancholic, romantic string pieces that sound like student exercises for *Sonata For Solo Violin* is a perfect example.

So Bagatelles is a fortuitously resplendent *Ten Pieces For Wind Quartet* in the best thing here. Ligeti forces the wind instruments towards the edge, shockwork that is his forte. However, he doesn't reach the extremes of *Lux Aeterna* in the post-war period, lush

funding of "advanced" modern art was meant to demonstrate the superiority of the capitalist free world to the totalitarian oppression of the Soviet Union. It gave artists freedom to express. However, severed from any genuine social power — dialogue with the mass of people — such freedom had a bitter taste. High art discovered the existential void. In *Ten Pieces*, Ligeti sounds as if he's quite happy to depict that void without doing anything about it, without producing any transformation. So even *Ten Pieces* lacks edge.

Today, Ligeti declares that he always created the Darmstadt idea of immaculate art with skepticism. The paradox is that he only reached beyond the social limitations of the classical concert hall when he interrogated orchestration with modernist rigor — and thereby produced something shocking and alive for Kluken to "exploit". Ligeti's chamber music, in contrast, is the sound of someone recycling the already known. *Sacches*, *Gewalt* (violence) and *Tabus* (Zemlinian) *Violins* play beautifully. The recording is excellent. But if you want to hear the kind of music, at its purest and most convincing, search out some *Violins*.

REN WATSON

soundcheck

Lata Mangeshkar

Lata In Concert: An Era In An Evening

SOVER MUSIC INDIA 48-7989 2XCD

How to explain the extraordinary success of Lata Mangeshkar, the undisputed melody queen of India? In 1947 she had her first hit aged 18, and then proceeded to dominate the Indian film music industry until her retirement in 1985. She recorded maybe 20,000 songs and dubbed vocals on some 2000 films. The commercial-minded conservatism of India's film business played a part: films were marketed on the back of hit songs, and singers were billed alongside stars, so the same few big names were used again and again.

But then there's the sheer magic of Mangeshkar's voice: most of her earlier work contains sparkling moments, apparently casual arabesques tossed like a ponytail, disguising the sophisticated vocal technique, the voice effortlessly featherlight and yet as firmly centred as a bell.

Mangeshkar retired at 56, and recorded nothing for 12 years until this double CD, which documents a 1997 concert celebrating her career. In a stadium before 40,000 people she performed 40 songs with orchestra and a chorus which "9-in-10" along to old Ray Conniff records. Celebrations contribute brief speeches and other sop singers step up for a duet, including several of her own family. Considering she was 68, Mangeshkar's voice sounds up well, but it's hardly surprising that its trademark youthful colour has faded. As a document in her honour these performances are fun, especially the 19 song medley concluding the first disc. But they can't compete with her soundtrack recordings, which form an exquisite oasis in a medium awash with fabulously overrated kitsch.

CLIVE BELL

Roscoe Mitchell Trio

The Day And The Night

0094-4101 CD

Oliver Lake/R Reggie Workman/Andrew Cyrille

Trio 3: Live In Wifflau

0094-4101 CD

Roscoe Mitchell made his name with The Art Ensemble Of Chicago, but as a player he's best heard away from the AAC's theatrics. In the 60s Chicago jazz discovered how to use space and silence, Roscoe knows that tradition alive. He copers with an eight minute outing on flute, his burgeoning sense of melody holding the pace. Gerald Cleaver's percussive teaching of a sparse yet richly varied universe of sounds. Bassist Rick Fawcett starts Roscoe's line without reducing it to a melodic banality. John Cage's Zen lessons is brought back into breathing song. Roscoe has his own music sound on alto, tenor and bass sax, using a slo-mo weightiness to make his musical production

Suicide

Suicide

BLAST FIRST BFFP 13CDL 2XCD/2LP

A lot of blood has been spilt in rock's pursuit of sensation since their debut was recorded in 1977, but Suicide still smacks of the ultimate act. The album cover design — their logos opened up veins and a solitary red star — twinned death with communism and at a stroke out to the quick of American fears. For all the USA's mythmaking about freedom of the individual, she recoils from the final frontier, especially when it's patrolled by a pair of psycho dogbreaths teetering on the brink like they'll happily go off the ledge — so long as they can take YOU out with them. The bonus live disc accompanying this long overdue reissue of their 1977 debut attests to their terrifying immediacy, what with vocalist Alan Vega's whispered threats sounding like seductive come-ons amplified right into your face, over Martin Rev's raw, minimalist, nerve-shredding electronics, comprised of adducted power surges and racing pulses.

In the sleeve-note interview by Marty Thau, boss of their first record label Red Star, Rev and Vega are still in awe of the violence their early performance elicited, the serious offence their very presence was capable of causing. The 23 minute cassette recording of their abruptly curtailed concert in Brussels (from 1978), originally issued as a promo flexdisc, wildly captures the traffic collision that was Suicide and their audience. The other live material included here, recorded at CBGB's the same year, is scarcely less abrasive, even if, unlike the Belgian affair, it doesn't end in tears and riot gas. It was not only the volume of their paranoia-inducing sound and Vega's sour attitude that so incensed spectators, apparently, they recall how people just couldn't cope with the sheer effrontery of a duo with neither guitars nor drums playing the most potent, if somewhat dystopic and dystopian futureshock rock anyone imbued by guitarlessness was ever likely to hear.

Whatever else they were, Suicide were at base as primitive, spiritual and unpredictable as Appalachian rockably stars running through Manhattan on a combustible cocktail of fear, adrenaline, moonshine and very crude drugs. They started terrorising NYC art centres, galleries and clubs in 1971, way before punk and early 80s British edgible electro duos familiarised the world to the idea of guitarless pop. Yet, as Martin Rev only recalls in the sleeve-note, their debut album was only released once all the punks had been signed up and no one else was left. Well, in their case the last one out lives on longest. Their debut is as brilliantly hostile and unassimilable today as it was on its initial release. No record summaries better the big hurt of a continent still angry in the aftermath of defeat in Vietnam, its psyche scared by GIS returning to a mixture of embarrassment and regret. With no way of releasing it, the anger eats America up from the inside, draining her of colour, energy and ambition, and toppling her into a depression fed by war debt. If Alan Vega revealed his empathy for Vietnam vets with the more direct addresses of his later solo records, it is already present in Suicide's debut. "Ghost Rider" was their requiem for the death of the degraded American frontier spirit, symbolised by



the title and the bitter sorrow contained in Vega's line "America! America is killing its youth", which he spits rays across Rev's pumping liquid grey sheets of noise, alive with paranoid pulses.

The album's dominant tone is dark, dripping off-white, run through with thin veins of lurid colour, like it was pulped down from tabloid newspaper and the funny pages. The misery of human interest stories reduced to miserably down page fillers are the stuff of Suicide songs. The bloodstain that American tabloid headlines cynically exploit also feeds Suicide, who suck it back up as savage slapstick — those power surges of Rev's electronics are like the lights going dim in the Big House at the moment they juice some poor sap in the chair.

It wasn't all grim with "Cheree" and "Keep Your Dreams" Suicide wrote the most sincere love songs this side of Patti Smith's "Free Money". Vega's inarticulate speech of the heart spoke volumes, while Rev's scolarized orchestrations cushioned love's sweet ache.

But Suicide's romantic side comes out more on their second album (released on Z6 in 1980). At this early stage, death and violence are writ largest and most lurid, even though their melodramas are so deliberately overloaded, they invoke laughter as much as compassion. Then they challenge you to hold the grin as they heap on the agony. They pile it so high on "Frankie Teardrop", their 10 minute masterpiece, it's as unbearably moving as one of Fassbinder's more remorseless movies. Fassbinder was a big fan of this album, and on "Frankie Teardrop", the tale of a man at the end of his tether killing first his family and then himself, you can hear why. The grimace is only relieved through the comic overload, summarised by Vega's priceless judgment, "We're all Franks!", even as Rev continues to bathe the horror in bare, searing lightbulb electronics. This is the kind of raw music that makes your hair stand on end. This kind of music is what electricity is for.

BIDA KOFF

something much more than a run-through. Favors and Cleaver know how to mess with the beat, arriving at things that sound casual, even careless, thus frames Roscoe's expressive (and often) disoriented patterns. When Cleavers played with Gentle Caesar's group on the *Austin* CD he had this gleeful uncertainty and was just down for it, but Roscoe shows there are worlds here that seemless confusion cannot breach.

Atroc Oliver Lake's music is more rhythmically driven. He springs from the St. Louis scene, which always had a stronger R&B streak than their Chicago counterparts. Like is an authentic proponent of his horn's Louis Jordan/Charlie Parker/Eric Dolphy lineage: tensile brilliance, cool and spry, propulsive flash. Like Reggie Workman (bass) and Andrew Cyrille (drums). Lake knows exactly what he's doing. When he squeals up high it isn't last-fiddler's expressive exhalation but a deliberate panel in an architectured structure, the distinction between spontaneous gesture and grand plan erased. People who can't hear into jazz procedure think the stuff all sounds the same, but once you cotton on, the scene of intuitive ensemble groove, sudden conscious twists and rhythmic pivots can be intoxicating. As here.

On "Shell" Cyrille plays a drum solo that in terms of space, surprise, wit, and cunning (bent contrast could serve as a lesson for any number of symphonic and electronic pretenders to organizing sound). Workman (who's played with everyone from Coltrane to Company) is wonderfully resonant, drenching everything in drowsy funk. On "Who's 9," his convoluted riff is so infectious it should immediately be stolen by some empyrean drum 'n' bass producer. The large Willaou audience clapped the trio to the echo, but Darrin's anarchy close focus recording ensures this doesn't diminish one's involvement with the music. Indeed, sounds are so deftly mapped you feel like abandoning the word "word" and calling this a Sonic Event. **SEE WASTON**

The Nazgul

The Nazgul
PS-F 9500005 CD

Pyramid

Pyramid
PS-F 9500004 CD

Temple

Temple
PS-F 9500006 CD

Here are three more installments of mid-'70s Rock discolorata originally released in extremely limited editions on Tokyo's Riders' Pyramid label in Cologne. The name Nazgul seemed familiar, suggesting a reference to my teenage self. I realized that was from Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*: it gets worse the music's also Tolkien inspired, and the group members call themselves Gandalf,

Frodo and Pippin. OK, the wizard Gandalf was cool, but to name yourself after a Hobbit, and Pippin at that? On paper this album should make Bob Marley's 73 keyboard opus *Lord Of The Rings* sound like Pavarotti. But amazingly, the Nazgul could as easily be a soundtrack to, say, the industrial wasteland of the Ruhr valley.

The trio are astonishingly inventive on these four unadorned, despoiling atmospheres ("Swirling Sky" finds Pippin's crude trumpet pitched against key keyboards, treated percussion and slowed down voices. It falls somewhere between the clattering abstraction of Peter Hammill's "Purgatory" and Tibetan ritual. On "Mount Doom", while noise synths pour down like toxic rain over a bubbling cauldron of sound, JRR is thanked on the sleeve. What the hell would he have made of it?

From Pippin to Posedon, the lead singer of Temple. He intones in a flat, portentous way. But evokes the ghost of Andrew Eldritch. His vocal for Pauline Funn — who also recorded with Cosmic Confusion — wrings lyrics of numbing pseudo-mysticism. Temples music beeps and pulsates with Armon Duul II in that their solvency is to uniform shreds, with David B. Helms' unpredictable synths occasionally blasted out of the frame by the FX-drenched malediction of Horst Kramer and Peter Fobler's guitars. But the comparison flattens them.

Pyramid's album consists of 5 minute pieces, presumably compressed 35 seconds per track. "Bass Defender" (with a line-up of guitar, bass, drums, Moogorganmelotron, the group follows a gently probing psychedelic path, more languid and blissful than say, Yet-ere Armon Duul II. Closer to David Vorhaus's mid-'70s space rock than prime Krautrock, it's a satisfying odyssey nonetheless.

SEE BARNES

Oval

Oval
THAL JOCKEY THILL046 CD

Somewhere back in time, a computer in Markus Poppi's house said "No." Oval no longer seems to be a group's it's become an information loop managed by Poppi. Dok is patched together from soundfiles supplied by computer composer Christophe Charles, currently living in Japan. Since Charles produced a copy of the R&M software Max/MSP on his own CD release for Mille Plateaux *Unchained*, you can bet there's a dialogue going on between these two about how best to make software the star. It sounds as if Poppi's carefree days with CDs and Stanley Kline are over. His primary tool is now Max/MSP as he adjusts the parameters within which it makes random tweaks to the music's tempo, pitch and volume, upping the guitars, but reducing the 'bowl factor.' Underneath is indeed a good word for his approach.

Nothing quite matches the chilly indifference of "Go Whistle" (on Oval's 94 Diskot), instead of scintillated CDs, Poppi is dealing with the sounds of church and temple bells (supplied

by Charles), informally recorded human voices and computer-generated tones. All these ingredients are processed — or rather, sliced, grinded and left sitting — in a negative image of Stockhausen's vision of Elektronika 5: Telemusik, a global connection machine. Deep in the background of "Invention VI" a woman's voice is lost and confused in a tangle of electronic synths ("Ghosts" has snapshots of crowd babble as if a hidden microphone is being tapped in "dekonstruction anything") (the phrase might well be Poppi credit, voices) are deployed as background noise, the track is almost entirely a slow fade to white. On the CD's inside cover, the jumble of computer code turns out to be the track titles listed alongside their system instructions — the lyric sheet for a computer karaoke singalong.

Dok leaves you feeling utterly estranged. Like Charlton Heston in *Planet Of The Apes*, you suspect you're at home, but there's the constant, creeped-up atmosphere that something else has seized control of the territory. Here, that something is software, a malignant system changing its way through Max/MSP and languages, leaving only distorted traces.

ROB YOUNG

Pantunes Music

In Search Of The Surface Noise
SRMHLMPHIC SP00047 CD

Various Artists

MeatTime
PLUMET & PLE CD

Like Mouse On Mars with "X-Files," and The Prodigy with "Mindfreak," Pantunes Music are good homophones, evening track titles such as "Clausrophobic," "Intravenous," "Palmecient" and "Lyslezer" — words which read like they're misspelled, making you doubt your mind. But unlike those groups, they reach sonic wilderness just once on this CD. Throughout in *In Search Of The Surface Noise*, Pantunes Music — a duo featuring Douglas Beviloff of S-Juice — is favorably headwinded by rhythmic beats by knitting needles and fiddlers that are too loud to impact. Tracks like "Phenobarbital" and "Marchpast" fret and fuss until they begin to irritate and, eventually, enervate. "Dive" is the striking exception, starting off with a rhythm like Harry Partch's *Cantor And Polka* patched at plus 6 then switching into the meticulously precise ballad melancolia that Deep Blue pioneered. "Dive" offers a pathway out of Pantunes' otherwise anomic electronics.

MeatTime on Mike Paradinas's Planet Mu label exemplifies the dysfunctional end of the breakbeat continuum. All the trademarks are here — the asinine essence of track titles like "Swiss Bunsen" and "Swiss Hardfist"; the power, sameness, preposterous rhythmism, cartoonish which details the groove.

Interruptions which sound like mistakes. Where Digital Hardcore producers like Shizuo and ECROR build a scorch 'n' scorch rhythmic engine of intermingling propulsion,

Paradinas crones like Horse Opera, Wafts and Elton Fastback wrongfoot you with rhythms that snag and stall. Their trademark is dressing breaks into a manic and tightly soaring sound. Emotionally, it's all fits and starts, robotic and low power, wispy and scintillating. The dysfunctionality are gross-maturity and contra refinement, but they aren't pro-disorder and dissonance like the Chrome producers either. Rather, they're restrained sonically because they're happy pull the rhythm up short and sensually, because the best tracks happily regress to childhood's aggression, egotism and helplessness.

Where the neurofunk must restrain the instinctual drives of the dancefloor, the dysfunctionality are at the mercy of those drives. They're everywhere but loose and this allows them to tap into the kinetics of toddlers and the mentality of a toy. Like The RZA, DJ Shadow and DHR's ECROR. Jegg's "DHC: Live Venison" uses the skull-snapping impacts of serial to generate an enjoyably cartoonish version of Jungle as a martial art. In *MeatTime's* "Furry Effect," where genre divisions melt against the pump of Detroit Techno chords, the sounds, clanking on the landing outside your brother's bedroom. With its kids TV-theme tones, Paradinas' "Brick Yourself" is another highlight, emptying a ruse compulsion to grandiosity into Wagner with white gloves, rescuing Walter Carlisle's Beethoven for a Mr. Whippy ice cream ven. **KOODO ESQUIN**

Pere Ubu

Pennsylvania
COO004VHVL CO00139 CD

It was inevitable that Cleveland's Pere Ubu failed to make *Channel Four's* 100 Best Albums of the Millennium list, even if by anybody's reckoning their 1978 debut, *The Modern Dances*, is a milestone for all rock. When it was first released, it was impossible not to be affected by the alien rumble steamrolling out of the speakers, or David Thomas's Beethovenian bab baby howl punctuated with his hammering of an anvil in time to Ubu's jagged, spiraling sound hole. *The Modern Dances* is one helluva classic album that the modern world chose to ignore.

When they get round to compiling another 100 best — let's hope they don't bother — they'll no doubt overlook Pennsylvania, even though it has the same blessed genius as their 20 year old debut. Featuring some of the musicians who helped make 1995's *Ray Gun* Sutcase such a creative smash, together with new drummer Steve Minahan, Thomas has wrapped around him a Pere Ubu who sound as sick, slippery and dangerous as a tank of electric eels. Pennsylvania gets an extra power surge, however, from the return of the Modern Dances guitarist/bassist player Tom Herman.

Hermanlike, Thomas shines brilliantly throughout, huffing, blowing and growling his way through a series of offbeat songs that range from an almost Grunge-like opener, to

Tortoise

TNT

CITY SLANG EFA 06705 CD/LP

"What's all the fuss about Tortoise?" shrugged a friend. "I went to see them live and they just played *Tubular Bells* all night." TNT isn't exactly 65 minutes of *Tubular Bells*, but you see the point — the 12 numbers build up discreetly in layers and mostly build in no apparent direction. The accumulation and the ability to sustain the suspension of energies are all that the music seems to be about. In other words, this is no big deal at all — described this way, Tortoise sound like warmed-up systems music (at least one of TNT's numbers is straight out of the Steve Reich exercise book). Yet Tortoise have a reputation for some sort of radicalism, and for arousing strong passions (their *Hilsons Now Living Will Never Die* was *The Wire*'s record of 1996). What is all the fuss?

Right now, much of it seems to be negative. Tortoise live evoke "a familiar, cool desolation of 70s jazz fusion" (*The Wire* 168), and I was warned about TNT that it was causing bemused shrugs. That turns out to be the record's defining quality — that it causes shrugs. It's not often that you hear music and can't figure what it's for — or, to put it another way, music that refutes the idea that music could be for anything. TNT isn't for dancing to, although it uses its share of current dance rhythms, nor apparently for elevating the soul or the mind. It's just there, doing what it does and offering a smooth wall of apparent indifference to whether it's heard by anyone or not.

Does this make it *Muzak*? Not quite, although it shares one quality with the tradition of supermarket sounds — it seems almost totally to eliminate any sense of dynamics, something that even Mike Oldfield's opus didn't quite do. Most of the numbers here feature the six members — in various instrumental permutations — gliding on an even keel, in perfect concord, with little or no sense of providing peaks or troughs. When they do produce them they tend to be purely structural rather than emotional. Hence the resistance to TNT — *Hilsons Now Living* displayed a more architectural sense of variation and release.

In one sense, there is something novel about Tortoise playing at this sort of anonymous pitch that isn't apparent when, for example, Electronica acts or Reich's own musicians hit their repetitive paths. Because Tortoise play down the craft and promote themselves as some sort of garage act with big ideas that don't quite gel with their apparently limited palette, you'd therefore expect them to slip and opt for easy emotional release. By and large, they don't, which can make TNT, for all its debonair lightness, even flimsiness, curiously oppressive. The sense of apparent pointlessness adds to that effect. TNT verges on the inexplicable in ways that records by their collaborators Stereolab don't — unlike them, Tortoise don't invoke a series of pop models that they can wear as masks, ironic pretexts. Tortoise, at the risk of being Zen about it, are just there, and you can ignore them if you like.

Part of TNT's impersonality comes from the group's use



of digital techniques they haven't used before, recording straight to computer and bypassing tape, resulting in an open-ended (and open-middled) approach to structure that makes for compositions that seem anything but goal-oriented. The record's major shortcomings are less flaws of invention than simply lapses in taste — "The Suspension Bridge At Iquitos Falls" begins with a guitar and vibes motif that evokes MOR fusion at its most fey, then lapses into a tropical-smooth reverie with Duane Eddy trimmings — Hawaiian holiday music for black polo necks. TNT's keynote is set on the opening title track where placid, woozy, quite deftly undemonstrative guitars are set against splashy, cymbal-based Max Roachery that seems to have been decanted off another record entirely. The climax of this, and the whole of "Swung From The Gutters", suggest an obvious reference point — Can, but in muted *Future Days* mode. And Tortoise at their most impersonal and machine-based are something else again — "Almost Always Is Never Enough" is practically a lab experiment in using drum 'n' bass language, but its layering of percussive gasps and (I suspect) tape mangled cat miaow is absolutely compelling.

Some music from the post-dance, post-rock area seems to be created late at night deep in the rocket lab. Tortoise seems rather to be decanted from some particularly affectless encounter group, or rather, from its aftermath, as if the group had already left the room where the music was made. And this, I'm assuming from their recording method, is effectively how TNT was assembled. Despite the title, it is one of the least expensive records ever made, and one of the most gently perplexing. It doesn't explain what the fuss is for, but it certainly gets you wondering about it.

JONATHAN ROONEY

"Fly's Eye", whose riff sounds like an out-take from a Pigeon Band session (sorry, David). This latest Ubu invites favourable comparisons with earlier incarnations, their dedication being almost as substantial. It is hard not to be moved by their huge surges of power and passion.

The greatest thing about *Pennywhone*, though, is how Pere Ubu suck you in and hold you fast and for 70 minutes you're convinced that they're the greatest out-rock 'n' roll group of this millennium, and probably the next.

EDWIN POUNCEY

Robin Rimbaud

The Garden Is Full Of Metal
(Hommage To Derek Jarman)

SUB ROSA 18104 CD

Robin Rimbaud uses the phrase "found potencies" to describe the fleeting juxtapositions of sound ushered together for the release. His music has always formed in on personal experience. On this project, though, voyeurism is set aside because those moments are his own. They're drawn from his ten year friendship with Derek Jarman.

In a way, Rimbaud's technique is analogous to the Dungeness garden that was the major preoccupation of Jarman's last years. Jarman gathered weatherbeaten objects from the seashore and placed them in harmony with the tormented, muted flora of the coast. In like fashion, Rimbaud weaves found sound around Jarman's even, unassuming voice, using for the most part simple, ancient means. His approach pays dividends — the music is effective for not being overprocessed, but rough-hewn tactile linked physically to the emotional impulses which inspired it.

Perhaps the most overtly moving track is "Follower", with its great, aching, sonorous strings drawing themselves up and subduing into vestal ambience. Elsewhere, rawe and hesitant melodies make tentative forays from dreamlike places. For those who can't top the doc's CD-ROM mini-documentary about Dungeness, "Drop" and "Wakefulness" most accurately evoke Jarman's garden. The former opens with the crunch of shingle underfoot and closes with the massive electrostatic hum of the power station barely a mile from Jarman's house. The latter surmises an adoration in teal bursts of effervescent white noise. Jarman's voice emerges as the tide recedes. "They of my presence have died yet" another furious surge. "In offhanded recovery" is as the release.

CHRIS SHARP

Silver Apples

Debut

WEAR/REB 40100 CD

Until a few years ago, only the dedicated obscurantist collectors of significant rarities knew much about Silver Apples. Their self-titled 1968 debut album was a remarkable

unexpected fusion of pioneering electronic technology with dated singing, seeming from above flower child to psychodeic apocalypse. For a lot of people, the duo's appeal didn't lie in the songs, which resembled a spaced-out Simon and Garfunkel. Instead, they praised the way the layered vocals (operated by the singer, Smeets) and melismatic drumming (Danny Taylor) antedated the likes of Kraftwerk by several years.

Judging from their live shows, the recently reformed group (minus Taylor but with a new keyboard player and drummer accompanying Smeets) had changed little, although Smeets' crowd stage presence was a welcome surprise after the often depressive contents of their original releases. Decatur is an unexpected departure, ditching the vocals and opting for a lengthy Transformer psychedelic jam in place of the songs. It's almost a bit, since I liked Smeets singing as much as I liked their proto-Techtonic propulsion, but I was still keen to hear the Silver Apples avoid the obvious and try out something new. Unfortunately, Decatur is a lackluster effort, dozens of individually glibbling moments held together by the firmest cobweb of direction. Every time a tasty electronic cousin appears amid the murky sonic soup, it's quickly submerged and dissolved into mush. Too much cosmic noodling and not enough moodie: they don't really seem to know how to make anything come, and the aimless drifting just doesn't hold the interest.

BRIAN HOGAN

Sonic Surfers

Transist
HLA HCD-1005/6 CD

Sonic Surfers are a four-strong core collective operating out of their own improvised studio in Vienna. Three are knob twiddlers and multi-instrumentalists and the fourth is a drummer. Yes, a drummer, so this isn't another European Electronica out-per se more a pop group seeking the requisite cloth ears and digital dystrophy. They list their instrumentation as follows: "A fly drum kit someone else's bass guitar, congas, a broken melodica, a blues harp, a wreck of a turntable, some electronics. So, something borrowed, something broken and oh yes, some electronics. There's a drum fly bass current running through the music, but an equally strong counter-current of drums, and the single 'Solo Rockers' neatly summarizes many neglected elements featured on the HLA/Dub collection compilations.

Still this hardly suffices to pinpoint the sound. "Life In Palmer" has a funk guitar refrain and droning dulc-sweet synth/drums propulsion. The "Pier" features that funk guitar again over a fat 60s pop move theme, "Tae-Tae Fly" means a pop vocal by Nanette Dillert with swathes of pure Electronica, DJ Rob DHT lacks "Dakari" with whiplash scratch slashes to effect the flute and oboe/skank dropouts and bedrock code.

Confused? Well you need not be, because

this is an immediately accessible and appealing recording. All these elements are generally utilised with minimal cliché, as in the case of "Flat," where trumpet and jazz bass and brushed drums are offset by off-kilter piano. It's simply a recording with a modern sensibility that refuses an electronic harshist. Drummer Michael Holzgruber allows the way the programming elements are approached by playing in counterpoint or playfully emulating machine patterns as seems appropriate. His companions make judicious use of assorted hand percussion and employ various acoustic instruments to add textural depth. This may not be startlingly innovative but it has a well-freshness which has seemed all too rare a commodity at the beginning of '98.

THOMAS

Sonic Youth/Jim O'Rourke

Immo J.J. Chelo
SONIC YOUTH RECORDS SMY CD 12

Dial
Infrachon
GDE CD 1 CD

The uniform packaging of the EPs issued by Sonic Youth Records, and the Esperanto titles of the third release in the series, could be read as a tribute to ESP, that great American label and home of countless mavericks. Whatever, the series is a timely nod to those people who have written off Sonic Youth's continuing claim to being at the vanguard of guitar group experimentation. Collectively, they're as great an example as any of devoted group interplay that aims for (and succeeds in) getting to the heart of overwound and formless free rock articulation. The result is an organic and buzzing whirr, ineliminable to any of its constituent parts, yet constantly teetering on the brink of chaos.

The third installment sees them roping in the ever reliable but occasionally over-booked Jim O'Rourke to expand the textural width and engage in a tag team scenario. Unlike the second SYR EP's in-depth investigation of microtonal sound structures, the accent here is on atmospheric wash and flourish, guitars howling like devilish loghorns, drums mtr-and-busted, O'Rourke blazes along some trumpet and whist sounds like a lightly strummed xylophone to add a noisy/fly, or, especially on the haughty turnaway sound of "Kingsize Nvst".

Dial's Jaxxon Horn was a one-time Blast First label misfit of Sonic Youth when she was in the consistently groundbreaking UK, whose four heavyweight LPs still send ripples through the underground. The Deed Is Done Russell once confided that he felt like picking it up in hearing the first live LP. In an odd twist, at times Dial almost sound like a female-fronted Deed C, taped on a cheap recorder, inhuman on the same deep, mushy mix as the NZ group, with dual guitars raging, while the bass boozers the music to give it a greater physicality. The

addition of a cheap and nasty drum machine, abused in much the same manner as Big Black, nicely buttresses their sound, allowing the guitars to head skyward for brief moments before violently crashing back to earth. Beautifully executed primitive rock (bled straight to cassette, like it was meant to be).

DAVID KEENAN

Sun Ra And His Arkestra Cosmo Sun Connection

recommended RSCD 1 CD

When someone told Sun Ra some time around the time of this recording that jazz was dead, his reply was: "Jazz is not dead. Jazz can't die. It's the musicians who are dead... they've been dead for the last 20 years!" This nugget comes from John F. Seward's recent biography, and is an opaque indication of the kind of unbound music on offer on Cosmo Sun Connection.

Containing 30 minutes of material "recorded USA 1984", this is a resuscitation of the record that came about after Recommended's Chris Cutler turned up in New York to pick up a consignment of albums they'd bought from The Arkestra only to find the money had been diverted towards easing the group's financial difficulties. He handed over the master tape to make up for the missing discs. This time round proceeds go directly to The Arkestra, who remain in a penurious economic state.

Once past the unexceptional "Fate In A Pleasant Mood", first recorded almost 25 years earlier, it's further back into the future with "Cosmo Journey Blues", a brief but lovely blues which begins as an ensemble performance and transmutes into unaccompanied boogie wogie. Next up, after a mechanical squall which sounds like a hand crank from the keyboards into action, you get more solo Ra, a three minute electronic disquisition that fills the auditorium with vibrant, sliding planes of colour. It's followed with some stop-start ensemble playing, in a dramatic mood, before allowing John Gilmore in for a wonderfully splintered, unaccompanied tenor solo. It's followed by another enigmatic and beautiful keyboard miniature from Ra, before the album closes with a melodramatic Ra piece that sounds like a rusty space rocket hitting an asteroid belt. There's perhaps an analogy to be drawn between the warring of stereotypically weird so-fa sounds here and the collected "Africanisms" of some of the Arkestra robes — it all happens at the same sky remove.

Take away the workaday dither, and you're left with just 20 minutes of music, but what a great 20 minutes.

WILL MONTGOMERY

Terre Thaemlitz Meats From An End

HLA PLATAIN MPD CD 1 CD

For Terre Thaemlitz, sonic synthesis is analogous to a bewitching, yet liberating

multiplicity of historically determined social agendas. It is also his tool for commenting on that multiplicity. Through his theses, undoubtedly some first, that's not to say his music disregards if you remove its theoretical scaffolding. Besides, the weighty language makes a radical playfulness — the project is far more engaging than first appears.

This disc comes in four sections. The first, called "Intelligent Implementations", loops brief jazz snippets and presses them through a waveform analysis of radical pop cultural soundbites, for reasons Thaemlitz's stenographic best format. The second part is a sonic essay on "overcoming resistance to radical social change", which translates as a witty reconstruction of Billy Joel's "Sail Like a Whirlwind Analogy" as an eight minute sound collage around a high register operatic drone — which satisfies you for the last part, the title track itself. "Meats From An End" bombards the listener with high frequency noises. In his attempt to deploy music as an agent of deconditioning, Thaemlitz's methods come close to the audience-baiting techniques of Non and Throbbing Gristle. But in its final transition from Minimal Music aggression to the End serenity of Evering Star, Thaemlitz raises the suspicion that he's not quite the stern neo-Platonist theoretician he makes himself out to be.

CHRIS SHARP

Various Artists

Rob Darge's Legendary Deep Funk Volume Two

BARELY BREAKING EVEN BOWEN CD LP

Record collectors are a strange lot. Spouses abound of people who have extensive collections in distant locations in case something should happen to their precious booty, or there's the man in New York who goes into the Tower Sale Annex every two weeks to check if they've put out anything new. Kobi Darge is no different, he's the part of that cult of celebrity collectors (Russ Dewbury, Giles Peterson, Norman Jay) who are responsible for the UK's Northern Soul/Rare Grooves/jazz club celebrations of African-American musical arcana by virtue of their willingness to shrimpy up drum chops to get into boarded up record warehouses in Harlem and rescue impossibly obscure records from the hungry maws of rabid rats. The second volume of his Legendary Deep Funk series comes with the impressive tag that the sum cost of the lot collected here would come to \$15000 if bought individually. But does \$5000, countless reviews and sales success buy more quality than \$12.99 plucked down at HMV on a decent James Brown release?

Unless you're a record collector, the answer is of course, no. The music itself that Darge inhales is a strange one where Ricky Calloway's scandalously shameless JB rip-off, or Billy Ball's Peters redux are better than the originals simply because they're rarer. The cult of rarity

soundcheck

also generates some alarming lapses in taste as evidenced by the awkward and lip-spitually of Sons Of The Kingdom's "Modernization" and Hairs & On's "Spread Love."

Without the dementia of the vinyl hunger-gartherer, however, no one would know about The Incredible Bongo Band's "Apache," The Honey Drippers' "Impact The President" or Lee Fields' "Vivian Rose," and the world would be a poorer place. Darge does unearth some gems of his own here, particularly the mid-60s groovers The Golden Toadstool's "Silly Swamp" as a transcendent piece of Hammond-led silliness which, after 25 listens, still sounds like one of the greatest records ever. TJ & The Group's "Blues For The Bs" has an undeniable groove that refuses to quit, Alton Butler & The Blazers' third should also note the fact. Wait-wait! town's should also note The Fabulous Mark IV's "Psycho" which appends hours courtesy of St Vincent's Latheries to some brownie guitar flanging. Some of it is inevitably drab (the recent flood of this kind of soft music someone had to start snapping the bottom of the barrel), but how often do you hear a record these days that begins, "Hey, Donald, what's on the other side of the street?" That's Ronnie Jones from Society "I hear he's pretty bad." "Yessah."

PETER SHAPIRO

Various Artists

Erótica Italia

BBT01 RECORDS 743113154193 CD \$20.95

Sex, like music, is about bodies and pleasures; the rest is just haggling over terms. So let's haggle. Hitting behind the shelves and dusted the vaults at EMI and Pye for their previous releases, *The Sound Gallery* and *The Sound Spectrum*, "sound curators" Florian Green and Patrick Winkler have now turned their attention toward the disco archives and started their own label, *Erótica Italia*.

More concept than compilation, *Erótica Italia* is billed as a "Karma Studio of Erotic Music," lifted from the soundtracks of Italian sex flicks of the 60s and 70s. Don't ask how they chose these movies; actually are, however, because the sleeve — an elegantly abstract *Gallery 5* take off — won't tell you. What you hear is what you get: information about the individual tracks is printed on an absolute minimum.

To experiment with the presentation of archival material is no last thing in itself, but if you're going to call yourself a curator, at least do the job properly. *Erótica Italia* ultimately suffers from Green and Winkler's desire to decontextualize their material in such a radical fashion, which wouldn't matter so much if their taste weren't so dated and eclectic. There's some massively entertaining material to be found here, but after the looting pop sensibilities of Crapseed Dick Hot Wax's excellent *Box At Onetto* series, with their

lud graphics, software stylings and detailed liner notes, it all seems a little stale and mannered. Which is not what sex should be about at all.

RIM HOLLINGS

Various Artists

Slaves To The Nations

WORLDJAZZ RECORDS 74023 7402

Various Artists

Subterranean Heat Volume 2

WORLDJAZZ RECORDS CD \$19

Two releases which testify to the continued vibrancy of Brooklyn's Worldsound. The label has moved from scratchy and very mixed beginnings to a broader set of sounds, without abandoning the rough-edged garage central to its its extremely self-conscious project.

Shoke The Nations updates, remakes, and often considerably improves a track each from the Worldsound back catalogues 22 albums. They range from a subtle take on Quabik Steppers' "Trust In Dub" to an aubade piece by Prince Charming. One notable tendency is the movement away from a narrow, bass-dominated idea of dub into a wide-open field of audio play, with hip-hop and dub acting more as basic reference points. Bill Lawless, to whom the Worldsounders tap their horns, frequently remakes one track and supplies another from his duo with Style Scott.

In contrast to the layered, pastoral constructions of Shoke The Nations, *Subterranean Heat Vol 2* is a collection of crunchy, bare-boned hip-hop. Contributors include Prince Paul, Afrika "Baby Bam" Of The Jungle Brothers and QJ Rob Swift. Nothing sums up the mood better than Swift's "Rhythmic Flow." Bumpy bass drum, hi-hat, crisp snare and a couple of low-slung chords that's pretty much it. But this bare minimal roll around seductively for four minutes and you'll draw in and lost in it for another two. *Glennville* and Prince Paul's "One, Check, One" is also inescapable, in a similar beat over flying cymbals. There's a bracing lack of pointless sample-finding here: nothing but the necessary is included. Mr. QJal even manages to get away with bawling a track on "Tears Of A Coward." There's humour there, too, even if you weren't expecting it: take the Hailef Gangulu Rappah Ennosse Wai Ghatz track. "Just broke the fuck out of a crazy hospital! I went through the curtains! They said it was impossible! I lost a consciousness over your nostril!" I guess, launching a series of hilarious, surreal lines that expose just how bad your average raps are.

WILL HORTON/SPY

Wingless Angels

Wingless Angels

INTELLECTUAL/ISLAND JAPANESE 914524447 CD

It is difficult to imagine how busy Rastafarians must have been upon first encountering Psalm

99, which contains the instruction to "make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise." With this engender the Rastafarians created their own liturgical music, played at the religious gatherings known as Nyabingi. A slow and relentless pulse from funde and bass drums alternates with the shuddered syncope of higher pitched repeater drums, as Rasta brethren chant hymns and songs of redemption. Rasta hand drumming is the African motive threaded through all cultural ragga of the 70s and beyond, to the dancehall and reggae recordings of the present day, yet comparatively little Nyabingi music exists on record in its own right.

Keith Richards and Rob Papiano recorded a Nyabingi ensemble, dubbed Wingless Angels by The Rolling Stones' guitarist, at Richards' wife in Ocho Rios. At first listen, The Angels' release sounds like a group one might hear when first stepping onto the tarmac at a Jamaican airport, sleepy, cheerful and mirroring to a tourist's ear, complete with a rendition of "Rivers Of Babylon", the closest thing in the Jamaican canon to a musical image that their sound could not be further from that of *Church Of The Holy Spirit*, the Nyabingi version released on CD by Heartbeat, recently a Rasta congregation for grounders in its anger peaked by a visit to their island from their President Ronald Reagan, channeled its fury into music. One of the more mandatory songs from *Church Of The Holy Spirit*, "White Boy A Follower" turns up on *Wingless Angels* recast as "Rasta Army" sounding much more like the Presbyterian hymn in which the tune is probably rooted.

Wingless Angels is not without moments of dried portent, though, the deceptive charm of many *Deeds* chanting "Enjoy Yourself" is tied in the next breath to the reminder that "it's later than you think." Slowly, the group's pedigree becomes apparent — Juan Hinds (of *Commas* fame) is one of many fine vocalists here — and combined with a language of album covers accompanying each track. The right moments to place in the affections of the beautifully recorded artists is probably the only time that Rasta percussion will get the full-on audible treatment. The bass and funde register first against the diatonic then the ear. Whether abetted by digital reverberation or judicious microphone placement, a spacious ambience gives the impression of being surrounded by The Angels' drummers. As producer, Richards has no compunction about adding instrumentation, layering transparent acoustic guitar throughout, along with electric bass and occasional flurries of Floyd Cramer-styled piano.

As with Brian Jones's recordings of Moroccan music, Richards makes use of studio sleight-of-hand to convey his own experience of the music, in the form of subtle edits creating seamless transitions between songs. The net effect is that of a smoky evening on Keith's porch. In the depths of winter, The Angels' companionable sound does much to warm a room.

RICHARD HENDERSON

Motoharu Yoshizawa

Play Unlimited

PIV 15005 CD

Ernst Reijseger

Colta Parta

WATA & WATERS NEW EDITION 1995 CD \$17

If love and theory was not inverted by Tokyo bassist Motoharu Yoshizawa, he was in at the beginning. Though Barre Phillips released the first album of double bass improvisations (*Shorecomposed*, BMA, 1968) the year before Yoshizawa's solo debut, he was already prominent in the Japanese free jazz scene, up there with pioneers like nose guitarist Masayuki Takayanagi. He's also partnered saxophonist Kaoru Abe and more recently, Kage Hara. Internationally, he's played with, among others, Derek Bailey, Evan Parker, Butch Morris and Barre Phillips. His effects-laden, homemade live string beds has given him the freedom to match anyone's, but his music finds its fullest expression when he walks the low end of the street alone. Sure, it's a lonely pace, though electronic echoes keep him company. *Playable* is a trifle lovelike, but playing acoustic double bass here takes him deeper into himself.

Exploring the instrument's capacities triggers introspection. So, in company improviser's style, Yoshizawa struggles against its melancholy by drumming directly on its body, or he defies its gravitas with speedily percussive passages and by rattling, rather than bowing, the strings. Eventually, however, he's compelled to allow a few creaky bass sweeps, roughly drawing long, uneven, lowering drones frosted with shibubis (the string player's way of "overbowing" his instrument?). Deliberately impoverished they might be, but their reverberations hum with potential. Inevitably, he follows their leads deep into the instrument's shadowlands, where the sciences are darker, even than the low tones he now more willingly explores with smoother bowing movements. Cues for fragmentary cues lead earlier, the tapes into a popular hymn that ought to be shockingly over-familiar. But Yoshizawa plays it like it was his defiance from the work of mourning which the improviser's been gnawing towards. Astonishing music.

The excellent Dutch critic Ernst Reijseger is more familiar as an improviser exploring his instrument's endurances than as a solo player. But *WATERS*' New Edition series is remarkably adept at treating classically formal works out of its artists. Reijseger's dallies interactively suggest resentment at agreeing to it to go "Volenciano Bastardo" ("Cello O' Bushra") "The Flower Of All Ways." These solo composers are like a holiday from the taxing restraints of his improvisations, his swift skimming of the score (if there is one) is appealing enough, evoking a pleasant, buzzing melancholy. But failing to present it thoughtfully, it's like metamorphosis into wretched motion.

BRA KOPF

in brief classical

Reviewed by Andy Hamilton

Ben Asram Neoplatonism

ARCTIC AIRBORNE CD
Arctic Recordings are Bay Area specialists in experimental and electronic music. Ben Asram and Sam Ashby share in the production of this disc of fractured, processed sounds. Unleashed 2 is a long, eerie track of muffled explosions, distant organ music and treated Monks. Paradox 7 and P Bone use a kind of information scrambling. On the former, only the remains of the beat are audible, and on the latter, an more rhythm accompanies fragmentary song and conversation. Original and intriguing.

Connie Beckley The Aquarium

CD 03795 CD
Subtitled *Sonic Misadventures On Life in the City*, Aquarium features words and electronics by Beckley, who was involved in the Philip Glass/Robert Wilson production of *Ersten* on CD in 1976. Her sound installations and "temporal sculptures" have effected a dialogue between visual art and music. Beginning with a glimpse through a window aquarium in a Christian restaurant, her poems describe everyday incidents against a muted and muddled electronic backdrop. A strange and oddly beguiling production.

Cikada Scandinavian Chamber

CD 03795 CD
Norwegians and Swedes have long hailed each other as the sleevenote sibs, but they bury the hatchet in this recording by chamber ensemble Cikada, who performed at the recent Hudsonfest Festival. All the pieces date from the 1940s, piano by Sverre Askvold, Perminell. Håkonsen and more subdued members of the ensemble in dialogue with electronics. Norwegian Rolf Wallden's *Solveig* CD is a vibrant exploration of competing sound masses, often coming across like the swing of a crazy pendulum. I'm looking forward to Cikada's upcoming CD on ECM. Their sonorous and inventive aesthetic deserves a wider audience.

Its prototype is leading Finnish composer Kaija Saareho (The Fins probably hate the Swedes even more because they were once part of Sweden). With Jonathan Harvey she's a leading exponent of combining synthesized or taped sounds with real-time instrumental forms. *Pavlov* resues the classic, *Vedertungen* from 1984 plus a recording of her recent *Noctua* for flute and electronics. Clearly there's a lot of rewarding contemporary composition coming out of Scandinavia.

HK Gruber Frankenstein! II

CD 03795 CD
Though modernists' isn't been noted for its sense of humor, sounds like Gruber and Kurt Schwitters have soaked fun at the Stochhausen school. But what especially upset Stochhausen's followers was Gruber's oblique refusal to tonality, found in his second vinyl concert on this disc, played by Ernst Kovacic. Gruber (born 1943) is one of a kind as composer and "chansonnier." His zany *Sprechgesang* — "speech-singing," as in Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* — is gleefully over the top on the edgier cabaret songs of his own *Frankenstein!* The comically shocking lines are children's songs, by HC Artmann, and The Camerata Academia Seiburg have to play unacademic toy instruments such as whistles and kazoo. First prize in the Unclassifiable section.

Robert Dick/John Wolf Brennan/Peter Wolfe Patumi

CD 03795 CD
These discs could have figured in a jazz 101 brief, but fluid boundaries with "straight" composition mean they belong equally here. Robert Dick on various flutes appears in both groups. — New Winds also features Herb Robertson (trumpet) and Ned Rottenberg (alto sax and daniels). Their jazz background is reflected in the intuitive structure of the compositions and, sometimes, the rhythmic conception. But despite touches of whimsy, the result is often bleak and unwhimsy. You're never too far from a folky feel in the work of John Wolf Brennan, but jazz content is more oblique. Swing bass as played by Daniele Patumi on *Arrivals* is a handstand in classical music, but the context is often very abstract and unclassical, as in *Chansons*. Elsewhere lyricism can turn into sweetness.

Roman Haubenstock-Ramati Graphic Music

CD 03795 CD
The recent hat ART release *Four Piano* (reviewed in The Wire 162) featured the work of this Austrian composer in different idioms: including conventional notation. But this disc is just what it says: graphic scores, the earliest from 1955, roughly contemporary with Earle Brown's better-known efforts. The score of *Battone* (1969) is shown on the sleeve — a large circle with swirling patterns and shapes, and not a note in sight. "Are moments improvising?" Good question. I think not," writes Jan Willem, percussionist in the trio here, with Iwan Hausmann on trombone and Elsewhere Burn on flute and

vocals. Two versions of *Kiese* for percussion and speech-singing differ not a jot — probably down to the performers' chosen constraints. Beautiful and unsettling.

Kamran Ince Second Symphony

CD 03795 CD
Though modernists' isn't been noted for its sense of humor, sounds like Gruber and Kurt Schwitters have soaked fun at the Stochhausen school. But what especially upset Stochhausen's followers was Gruber's oblique refusal to tonality, found in his second vinyl concert on this disc, played by Ernst Kovacic. Gruber (born 1943) is one of a kind as composer and "chansonnier." His zany *Sprechgesang* — "speech-singing," as in Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* — is gleefully over the top on the edgier cabaret songs of his own *Frankenstein!* The comically shocking lines are children's songs, by HC Artmann, and The Camerata Academia Seiburg have to play unacademic toy instruments such as whistles and kazoo. First prize in the Unclassifiable section.

Robert Marcel Lepage La Plante Humaine

CD 03795 CD
Lepage's edited soundtrack from the *La Plante Humaine* by Pierre's leading animated film maker Renee Hebert. "Neo-romantic borrowings" merge into African percussion and jazz, in a mostly fluid kaleidoscope with some sharp interlarding with the voices of the film's characters included. How it worked on film I couldn't say, but the lacustrine result is not the "Symphonic rendition" the sleeve note winter prizes.

Michael Nyman Concertos

CD 03795 CD
The famous *Placido* Concertos, for saxophone solo and orchestra, appear on disc, with discreet support from the Chorus of Placido UK, which commissioned it. ("The work was an integral part of Madsen's ongoing campaign to give the brand a distinctive image.") But the collusion between art and business, as recorded in a chime-making TV documentary, has proved richly comic, with Nyman also sounding off in print about his patrons. The usual suspects include John Harle and Julian Lloyd Webber — it's a paying gig, might be their motto, but who knows, self-censorship can work wonders. Compared with his hardcore *Placido* days, Nyman thinks he's "softer and smoother now" and the *Horchard* Concerto has its moments, especially the dark opening. But there's too much note-spinning. Nyman means about the crisis, about conspiracy, but they could be on to something.

Jack Vees Surf Music Again

CD 03795 CD
Eleanor Hovda Coastal Traces
CD 03795 CD
"Not a pretty picture at all, but hard to look away from," writes the legendary Ingram Marshall in his sleeve note for *Surf Music*. There's true of all tracks except *Soprano* from *Groovy* for handbells (rather pretty) and the song *Green Wires* from *Wires* (the Wires sound on *Robert Gray*, featuring '50s and '60s, radio debris). *Intoxicated* Taped electronics feature reprocessing and re-reprocessing, and the thick-textured individual sounds that result bear out Marshall's assessment. It's the synthesis of classical and rock approaches that marks out Vees's work. He worked as a rock bassist before studying with Andresen Glocker and Subotnik. The results here are rugged and disturbing.

Vees turns up on electric guitar and bass, with Libby Van Gieve on stereo and oboe on *Coastal Traces*. Written to counterpoint the dance of the Nona Meehan Company, Eleanor Hovda's graphic scores involve discussion with performers beforehand — what she calls "recreating the sound." Takes were unedited, but the sound is processed to mimic church acoustics. It is haunting music, especially when the part of the Wires is in play, while weaving mountains for bass recall *La Monte Young's* explorations. *Placido* has *Surf Music* but just as compelling.

Kevin Volans Concerto For Piano And Wind Instruments

CD 03795 CD
I had Volans down as not a particularly inspiring *Placido*, but this recording has changed my mind. The Concerto as Volans says, his an early 20th century feel — Stravinsky wrote for the same forces. But there are African elements, too, contrasting rhythmic tension with the heroic *Placido* rhythms. *Placido* treats the Netherlands Wind Ensemble "like a vast verve ensemble" and there are characteristic four against three rhythms. The result is a substantial and engaging piece of work. Also impressive is the closing *Unleashed* (in *Placido*), which the composer wrote during the shock of September.

Min Xiao-Fen Spring River, Flower, Moon, Night

CD 03795 CD
Min Xiao-Fen is the leading virtuoso on the pipa (Chinese lute). Pieces here are mostly traditional — the most recent is 18th century — but Xiao-Fen has worked with modern composers such as Tan Dun, and leading improvisers like Smith. George Lewis and Derek Bailey. Some of the oldest pieces are nearly 2000 years old, and quite how they've been preserved I'm not sure, given the austere state of Western musical notation of the same time. The *Wind* style is lyrical. *Wu* pieces are martial and require remarkable virtuosity, for instance the taped ornaments on *Non Placido*. A beautiful record...

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in brief critical beats

Reviewed by Peter Shapiro

AI People Do It W/roscop outside

outside 12" Straighthead meets retro Electro. With less of an angle on the standard 808 beats and vocodered vocals than the KhanJammin Unit posse or Detroit's Direct Beat crew, this sounds like its creators have run out of ideas. The Metamatics mix, however, shows a willingness to play with the form, sounding like cybernetic Jugu music from the Mothership orbiting Mars.

Arcon 2 NeutShock reworked

reworked 12" "Neut" and "Shock" are bleak like two-dops, but nowhere near as stiff. The drum sounds and angular synths may be as rigid and senile as John Redwood in a Robocop outfit, but they are put together with as much attention to outlandish groove as Sly Stone in a gold mine thong.

Justin Berkovi Crouches EP

msc101/mcsc02 12" An EP of sharp Techno spazms courtesy of Cristian Vogel's Muzoqui label. The A-side (there are no sides, of course) features two tracks that are rhythmic onslaughts: drum paroxysms and full-on synth effects used as jarring, percussive interjections. The B-side is softer and less angular, but no less oblique, and Berkovi really shows off his drum programming prowess with lots of tempo shifts and neat filtering tricks.

Big Kwam Execution Expert

ambivalence 0000 12" **Ambivalence** Comm. EP cassette: ambivalence 0000 12" The final EPs from Big HipHop producers The Creators' label. The title track of Big Kwam's 12" features beautifully detailed production constructed from skull-squaring snares, four different swathes of disco strings, a hint of wah-wah guitar and righteous scratching by DJ Thing. After Company Flow this is one of the freshest sounding Hip-hop releases for a while.

The Ambivalence EP is dragged down a bit by its downtempo format, but there's no doubt that these guys have a formidable record collection and know how to use it.

Blame Visions Of Mea!

0000 0000 0000 0000 12" **L/TJ Bukem** Mystical Realms 0000 0000 0000 0000 12" Blame's latest single implies that they're been listening to Phish's "10/0s" and "Rings Around Saturn" at Good Looking HQ. And it's not a bad thing either, as the

gathering, rainforest textures of old have been replaced by what sounds like Techno as scored by Ben Bachiway. One quibble, though: when are they going to get a new drum sound at Good Looking?

The drums on Bukem's "Lucky Voyage" are pretty groovy, however, and make this track the best thing he's done in a very long time. But the rest of this EP is so clean it sounds like a Chevy hi-fidelity jazz CD.

Creaktion Alright, One More Thing!

Alright, One More Thing! 12" With its overload of percussive effects and a secondary bassline that acts like a chicken scratch guitar, "Alright, One More Thing" is a swirling ball of mounting tension that never fully resolves itself. Producer Mizkian performs similar semi-madness on "Double Bass", suggesting that the future, clockwork drum of the past year have not infected all drum 'n' bass.

The Guyver Do Or Die (VI)

Mod/Slow + KID RECORDS 0000 0000 12" Effectively a Junglist remix of AZ's underground Hip-hop classic of the same title, "Do Or Die" revisits 95-era Jungle with splintered breaks and torpeding bass subs in an effort to round out the bleakness of the Industrial FX. The same trick is employed on the flip with giddy, near Hardcore breaks underneath a live fusion inspired baseline.

Jadell A Brand New Sound

0000 0000 0000 0000 12" Well, how fun, fun, fun, is his Daddy takes the A-side away. Unlike the rest of that ever-growing subculture of charity shop knockouts, Jadell actually manages to make something remarkably groovy out of all those Black & White Motorbikes and Max Bygraves records lurking in the country's Oxfam shops. Harpsichords, Spaghetti Western guitars, sleazephone, choirs, cowbells and old school HipHop caboblate on this vision of dancefloor Eden.

King Kooba Breakmaster

0000 0000 0000 0000 12" **Llorca** Little Computer People / COMMUNICATIONS 0000 0000 12"

Two examples of left grooves that prove you don't have to be smart to be jazz. The Ronnie & Cyndi mix of the sick jazz funk number "Freelmeister" is the best thing on King Kooba's 12". They pile everything — a '70s street scene from the Sheriff soundtrack, an Acid trip on John Wink, and a Hansi Simone soundtrack — on top of the original

vamp to make it very sexy indeed!

Llorca's 12" is an EP of well-constructed, moderately uplifting jazz-house that works because Ludovic Llorca is into Charles Mingus as much as Roy Ayers.

Problem Child "Tonic room"

0000 0000 12" **Disorder** When Disorder Strikes in room 0000 0000 12" "Tonic" is a breakfast terrorism that mixes drum drably, clinical two-snap to get-busting drum drably and bass bosts. It's staggering how much more effective and effective the post-dancefloor, post-industrial posse of drum 'n' bass is when its synth armaments are added to the grapeshot snares of the "Armen" break.

The seriously brutal Disorder 12" offers more proof of this. Beginning with a lick of G-Funk strings, the collaboration between Problem Child and Panacea is gangsta rap gone really bad. That is, they sound like they really mean it.

Third Eye Foundation/V/VMM

Split 12" TAT DAT 0000 0000 12" The vigiliantly Junglist, dark ambience of Third Eye Foundation, and the decay and deterioration from newscasters WMM, never to good old Bush merriment as the sound of abandoned clock works, crumbling infrastructure, any sense of optimism revealed as the superficially futurist backwash of a retrograde society. WMM's seemingly off-the-cuff approach to the utter redundancy of titles in Electronica — nicking phrases and abbreviations from the personal ads — somehow makes their stuff that much more grim and hopeless.

Max Tundra Children At Play

0000 0000 12" Yet another one of Squaresphere's ramper room playmates. All the familiar hallmarks are present: a five-year-old's understanding of synecdoche, a loco Rastaman down on the synth bass and more textual information than anyone could hope to process. But there's a sense of groove here that rears in the self-indulgence even when the drums go completely apocalyptic and the atomised fragments of Alphonse Poulzon threaten to stumble over themselves.

Various Artists Grow! For It

0000 0000 12" The same deliciously kitsch spirit that fellow Venetian labels Cheap and G-Stone display with Techno and Hip-hop, Grow! applies to House. Lots of well disguised disco peffing and thoroughly filtered instrumental passages make the EP one of the completely unafraid to dance in front of the bedroom mirror. For those who have never been seduced by the glitterball, Grow! B's "While They Sleep" is subdued enough to recall Porter Ricks in hot pants. ☐

in brief jazz & improv

Reviewed by Barry Witherden

Jamie Baum *Sight Unheard* CD 091031 CD

Despite the efforts of James Newton, Gerd Duedel and a few others, the flute remains a second-string instrument in contemporary jazz. Baum won't change that. Her solo on the opening "Seven Seals To The Story" is absorbing for its choice of notes and spaces, but it signally fails to make a sonic impression: maybe the instrument's limitations hold her back. Where Baum makes her mark is in the writing. She has no ambition beyond making finely crafted jazz, and in these eight originals (plus Ornette Coleman's "Like My Bontá") she makes it come true. **Richard Cook**

William Brewster *Twice A*

Worms/Davidly: Six beautiful trio CDs. Recordings of Brewster's main ensemble, the Kolkiteel, provide an incomplete experience of his work. For a full appreciation you need to see it perform its mock chaotic mélange of jazz, tango, rock 'n' roll, light 'n' heavy classics, and anything else unafraid enough to fall into the blender. So this CD, a reissue of the original soundtracks for two late '70s films, is not unusual in presenting the music minus one component, the visual element. Fortunately, the consummate showman collaborator Brewster's artistic persona alongside the consummate composer and arranger, the setter and subverter of moods, the upsurger of expectations and the poker-faced parodist, all of whom crop up here. Despite the vertiginous eclecticism, this is unmistakably a dispatch from deepest Breukelenite. **Barry Witherden**

Chris Barr *Musio For Three* Rivers Vert 050 CD

Six of these 11 pieces were recorded in concert in London and Canada, and the sessions span 1995-97. Barr, an expert exponent of Cage and Cowell's plays prepared piano for the bulk of the programming and like Sakis Papaianou, frequently has you suspecting, unjustly, that resources other than the piano have been used to provide some of the least plausible (and plausible) sounds. He's never gimmicky, though; he considers all the possibilities the instrument offers but which are neglected by the vast majority of composers and performers. Nor is he coy about it—his fundamental percussive nature—in the contrary he demonstrates its potential for more ethereal effects too. Barr really does play the instrument as object rather than merely playing on it. **Barry Witherden**

Paul Dunnall/John Adams/Mark Sanders *Ghostly Thoughts* Horizon 050 CD

The presence of Dunnall and Sanders on a session is as close as you'll get to a cast iron, no exclusions guarantee of breathtaking penous, exhilarating improvisation. Gustaf Adams, though less well-known, is a thoroughly worthy partner: he can sound like a one man duo, functioning in the roles of both guitar and bass, providing a harmonic underpinning here, playing a provocative chord there, and stirring it up in the general malice elsewhere. Produced by Evan Parker, this session from July 1996 is peaced with imaginative, alert, genuinely interactive music making. Power, tension, attention to detail, posture, pace and structure are there. Busting, blistering and effortless formulaic cliché running are not. **Barry Witherden**

Pierre Favre *Singing Drums* Soundfile Attack 050 CD

Pierre Favre's *Singing Drums* has an unusual but effective line-up: the excellent saxophonist Roberto Ottaviano (whose recordings on the Spelchi label are well worth seeking out) and superb virtuoso Michel Goudart, and percussionists Favre and Lucien Niggi. Favre's work typically has a ritualistic quality, and here it is as if the percussion instruments are characters in a drama, with the reeds and brass sketching the environment and commenting on the plot. The music is mainly introspective but not self-indulgent, and the playing is controlled and precise without ever becoming stilted. The title could, if you're not averse to puns, be translated as "inspiration"—and that says it all. **Barry Witherden**

Hasidic New Wave *Jews And The Abstract Truth* Kiting Factory Wides 050 192 CD

The cover says *HNW* is a mixture of klezmer, horos, freilachs, rock 'n' jazz and ballads with improvisations and outside jamming. If you're expecting Ziggy Elman or the wedding scene from *Brint*, then, again, things have moved on a little. The group comprises trumpeter Frank London (Klezmerik), saxophonist Greg Wall, David Huczyk on guitar, bassist Kenny Davis from Herbie Hancock's group, and Aaron Alexander on drums, plus guests on a few tracks. There's plenty of very fine, often dazzling playing by everyone, with some particularly effective work by Wall. Several tunes are drawn from the traditions of a variety of cultures of the diaspora, some many centuries old, but there are also recent compositions and instant improvisations. **Improvise**

William Hooker *Mindfulness*

OUTING FACTORY WIDES KRW 213 CD
This intriguing trio of drums (Hooker), reeds (Glenn Spearman) and turntables (DJ Olive) was recorded live at Slim's in San Francisco in July 1996. Spearman was just sitting in that night, but there's nothing tentative or diffident about his brawling, raucous sax, nothing to suggest he wasn't part of the plan. New York's DJ mixer Olive turns those tables loose, building record ensembles centered on Spearman, dovetailing his capricious forces with the live players, layering backdrops of abstract sound, or cutting across the improvisations with jagged shards of jocular, percussive or white noise. **Barry Witherden**

Jan Kopinski *Ghost Music* Axi 050 CD

As a keen Pinski Zoologist, I approached this fairly affair with some trepidation, regretting the absence of bassist Karl Wesley Bergheim. Steve Liff is brought forward on keyboard and programs, but Steven Kopinski contributes bass (and programs) and Janina Kopinska plays viola. Jan Kopinski's talent for wiring striking or beautiful or strikingly beautiful tunes was always evident, but in the harp of Pinski Zoo the finer points could get submerged. Not here. Though this is a predominantly lyrical album, the emotional intensity and musical power of his work with PZ is retained. Plus: with this combination of earnestness, expertise and passion is a rare blend indeed. Snap it up. **Barry Witherden**

Lob Megaphones *Blue Death Bunny* RECORDING NO NUMBER MC

It's nice to know the wobbles is still running. Piles down. Truth to tell, several of his *inter vivos* recordings failed to reach this standard. Megaphones gets a number of well-kept grooves going, no mistake, and bonus points also include Ben Caswell's Band name, and if you liked that stuff you'll go for this. *Mixing* stream hours, electronic games and samples. Megaphones is funny, kaleidoscopic, exotic (cop the gamelan) talk and unpretendingly entertaining. It's already pencilled in on my list of most enjoyable records of the year. **Barry Witherden**

Miya Masaoka Trio *Monk's Japanese Folk Song* Axi 050 CD

Thelonious Monk recorded his interpretation of the traditional Japanese song "Kiss No Tots" in 1966. But the programme is more than a case of a far East musician returning the compliment. Monk's unique style had correspondences with Japanese music in its use of space, of silence, in his creation of moods and colour, setting him aside from the bebop school, of which he was allegedly a rogue member, and its emphases on fast, furious harmonic complexity. For Monk it was richness rather **Barry Witherden**

than complexity that mattered. Masaoka pecked her dream rhythm team (Jogge Workman and Andrew Cyrille) for this project, and they really do work like a dream. Masaoka plays the koto ("just a hollow tree with strings," she demurs) and achieves an utterly fascinating synthesis. **Barry Witherden**

Greg Osby *Further Ado* Blue Note 72405654129 CD

When Osby moved to Blue Note in 1990 and recorded *Man Tak For Moderns*, many critics were unimpressed. In *The Wire* I was more sympathetic, finding it convincing where the thousand similar albums around at the time sounded merely continued. I liked it in spite of all that H-Base paraphernalia. Osby's obvious potential has been more fully realised when not hampered by such self-conscious baggage. *Further Ado* is cast in an older but less dated style — in the Blue Note tradition, in fact. The album's well crafted and enjoyable, but Osby's time and technique always promise something more gripping. The sense that potential has not been achieved is inevitably disappointing. **Barry Witherden**

Pachora *Pachora Kiting Factory Wides 050 201 CD*

More evidence of rich cultural interaction and musical syntheses at the Kiting Factory. Pachora views the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean through downtown New York shades. To add to the mix, there's an invader on bass, and Brad Shepik plays the saz (a Portuguese guitar). Carlo Actis Gatto used to do this kind of thing well — maybe still does. Dance inspired, it has considerable grace, elegance with a edge. *KFW* claims this is one of its most eagerly anticipated releases. It was well worth the wait. **Barry Witherden**

Bobby Previte's Latin For Travellers *My Man in Sydney* ENA 9348 CD

Drummer Previte sees this as a return to his gaggling roots, and resumes his on-off affair with the guitar, helmed here by Jerome Harris. He calls the group a bar band, which seems overly modest, rather like calling Kronos a palm court quartet. Though it covers familiar ground in the kingdom of rhythm, it does so with such a nimble tread, such grit, panache and dexterity, that it feels fresh and riveting. **Barry Witherden**

Kazutoski Umezaki *First Deserter* Kiting Factory Wides KRW 214 CD

Though he'd been busy on the New York scene for some while previously, I first heard Umezaki in the 80s on some recordings by his quartet Dr. Umezaki. The albums were radically contrasting, setting snappy funk against abstract improv. He touches both bases here, and prices past a few more points from the outfield to the front stand. **Barry Witherden**

in brief out rock

Reviewed by Tom Ridge

Aerial M Wedding Song No 3/Mountains Have Ears **comeo** RECORDS 12

UI The 2-Sided EP/The Sharpe (1993-1995) **own** RECORDS 1649 CD
Aerial M at last sound fully formed: their subtly powerful rhythm section and chiming guitars amass buoying crescendos of sound. Yet these tracks still lack the experimental edge displayed by early Tortoise (Dave Pajo's other group), when they used the studio itself as an instrument out of homage to dub pioneers like Lee Perry and King Tubby.

The UI release documents the group's evolution from a direct, bass-heavy instrumental outfit, as showcased on 1993's 2-Sided EP, to the more layered textures found on 1995's *The Sharpe*. The factor common to both UI discs and also Aerial M, is a great sense of momentum born out of real rhythmic confidence.

Alternative TV Punk Life **own** RECORDS 0670 CD

This is a bizarrely eclectic collection from Mark Perry, heavy on irony even as he can't resist anthropomorphizing the past and his place in it. So the opening synth pop of "Unlikely Star" — "I'm not exciting, yet intelligent as fuck! I remain an unlikely star!" — is followed by the rambling, autobiographical "Punk Life" and the neo-punk rock of "Give Me Love" and "Jane's Not As Home," which sound authentically 1977. A lengthy Throbbing Gristle tribute confuses the matter further, and the declaratory "God Saves" casts Perry in a double Johnny Rotten/John Lennon role. "Anarchy in a vacuum" he rants on the title track, providing a neat summation of this record.

Bardo Pond Lapsed **major** 12-11-04 CD

Transient Waves Wading & Waiting **major** 12-11-04 CD

You could play these two releases off against each other in a psychedelic good cop/bad cop routine. Transient Waves delves in the light of undulating rhythms and skyscraping Ambience, while Bardo Pond plunges you immediately into the darkness of gargantuan riffs and furiously buzzing guitars. The track "Flux" might well end up as the year's most ponderously heavy piece of music. Both releases capture a sense of dislocation, but Bardo Pond's brutality bruises longer.

comeo Come It Down **The Stream** **own** RECORDS 12

Come's fourth record is a stident after characterized by their hard, brittle guitars

and propulsive drums. Thali Zedek's sneering, guttural vocals mark the majority of tracks. If her subject matter is predictably bleak, it's offset by the music's dynamism. In common with Royal Trux, Come operates on a male-female partnership, here Zedek and Chris Brokaw, and both groups heavily customize trad rock modes. But in truth they're closer in spirit to The Gun Club, whose amped-up blues and doberbeat mythologizing are frequently recalled in Come's sound and fury.

Exit Sort **own** RECORDS 12

For his second disc Charles Holmes has forged two impressive pieces of experimental guitar music. The edgily intense "An N" features a feedback drone pitched on the edge of exposure, but Holmes' controlled hand keeps it from blowing. "Idiot House" goes a step further by stationing a single seismic hum reverberating through the speakers for 25 minutes: to be caught up in it like being stuck in the bowels of a wet generator. And that's about it in terms of variety. But in this company, a rich sound palette is akin to bad faith, a betrayal of the tenets of a minimalist rock experimentalism founded on reinvention and endurance where development unfolds over time.

The Fall Masquerade **artful** **own** RECORDS 1202

Fall singles are now footnotes to albums, rather than entries in their own right. "Masquerade" is lifted from last year's *Leviathe* LP, in a "Single Mix" that wipes some of the noise from the depths of the original, only to replace it with like keyboard fills and a "spoken word" section voiced by an adolescent girl (Lolita of Los Lunas!) Also from *Leviathe*, there's a new mix of "Ten Houses Of Eve," and live versions of "Spencer Must Die" (actually two live versions spiked into each other) and "Ol Gae." Plus three excellent new songs, all mastered at demo tape stage, 4 sounds like "Yonkers Two Pence," "Scarab" and "Calendar" which sounds as if new guitarist D Gough has bastardized the riff from "House Of The Rising Sun." More essential variations on The Fall's querulous passage (Tony Harrison?)

Fiend 1 Caladrius **Gothic** **own** RECORDS 160001 CD

Fiend 2 Caladrius **Cosmic** **own** RECORDS 160002 CD

Mushroom Alive And In Full **Blond** **own** RECORDS 160003 CD
Blondie O'Hare's final project presents a

remarkable synthesis of Kosmische, No Wave, Ambient, and Japanese psychedelic elements over two discs. With the help of his former Tetras Pines cohorts, Fiend 1 combines passages of instrumental intensity with moments of subdued beauty, its scope is extraordinarily wide and impressive. And then there's a whole second album's worth of material from *Fiend 2*, the "Cosmic" companion to *Fiend 1*, which finds O'Hare less brutish mode from the space rock of "Paranoic Tmeses" to the cosmic drizzle of "Spacetime" and atmospheric dislocation of the epic "The Birthplace Of Stars." A monumental achievement.

San Francisco's Plasmium, on the other hand, apply their enthusiasm a little too literally, producing an overly academic Krautrock tribute. The all-round structure and delivery of tracks such as "Kiss Loves A Funny Bunny" and "Dinger & Rafter Vult" The Reeperbahn are sound enough, but they lack the edge of their inspirations.

Flap Flap **Am** In The House/Spotlight **own** RECORDS 1201

Pop began promisingly enough with the ramshackle "The Alligator" quirky rhythms based on frantic percussion and acoustic guitars and a nice line in lyrics. "He wants to go up in the some some as Rome Van Zant" — "Thereafter" is a long, undiscovered talent through a series of semi-related ideas and musical cut de sacs. Tantalizing glimpses of an interestingly skewed pop sensibility occasionally emerge in "The Real Thing" and "Semi-Pro Big Factory" — but they're all too brief.

Fridge Semaphore **own** RECORDS 1202

Parr Whales Lead To The Deep Sea **own** RECORDS 160003 CD
Where Parr come on in like a repetitive variant of the Quartercut Records sound —, silky bass, loud riffs and lurching textures — Fridge have a more extensive armoury of rhythms and textures to displace from. Indeed, no two tracks on Semaphore really sound alike. There's the insipid drums and distorted guitars of the forced "Crescent" "Crescent," the spacious, dubwise "Humiliate Boy" the graceful, acoustic-led "Chromis" and "Low Fat Diet," which sounds like a brilliantly deconstructed "Walk On The Wild Side." Parr vary their instrumental output with songs like the urgent "Trust" and the impassioned "Better," where the vocals offset the glacial improbability of the music. But they get somewhat monotonous over the distance.

Hood Rustic Houses And Forlorn Valleys **own** RECORDS 1202

Hood's follow-up to their first and most lo-fi album, *Stranded Dealers* is a far more measured set. For the most part it's subdued and doberbeat. With decreased low end

drums, undulating keyboard waves and whispered vocals, Hood forge an interesting, partially abstracted sound, maintaining a slightly wary mood of dreamlike semi-detachment throughout. Sometimes it leads them into an unforced mess, but when the music comes together, it acquires a melodic sweetness.

Lake Of Dracula Lake Of Dracula **own** RECORDS 1202

Spo-Its And Your Little Dog Too! **own** RECORDS 160001 CD

Lake Of Dracula peddle furious, avant-rockably, replete with discordant guitars, high-speed, indecipherable vocals and punishing drumbeats. It's like a combination of Dogme 19 and The Grapes and The Birthday Party taken to a manic extreme. The fact that it's on San Graft and engineered by Jim O'Rourke may give it a certain underground cachet, but really it's fairly tough going.

The Spo-Its come from a similar place, though they veer more towards the Jon Spencer/Cramps axis. Their music is disfigured with crudely obvious novelty lyrics, dangled rather than sung. The titles really tell you all you need to know: "Kung Fu Jesus," "Fuck You," "Gust," "Dead Girls Don't Say No." This is elemental garage rock, exorcised with some verve but let down by its blantly ironic expositions of white trash culture. Their live set apparently features topless go-go dancers smashing television sets, which reveals of the kind of desperate showmanship of The Plasmatics.

Pram The North Pole Radio Station **own** RECORDS 160004 CD

Third Eye Foundation Sound Of Violence **own** RECORDS 1201

Pram's world is like a parallel past, white teenage life. Listening sounds are re-channelled into subtle modern configurations, where their thin, almost callous vocals reveal dark undercurrents. They're a musical equivalent of David Lynch's *Blue Velvet*, in fact. The lyrics to "Crescent," for instance, are all odds with the bybook keyboards and jaunty Latin rhythms of the music. "Uncomfortable insects" leading our nocturnal lives, becoming of becoming lies." The Pram paradox is the more successful their evocations of suburban boredom, the blonder their music gets.

No such risk for Third Eye Foundation, a springboard for spoken modernity since Mast. Elitist dripped fuzzy guitars for morose, beat collages. That you can't accuse him of parodic blandness doesn't guarantee his own stuff is as more interesting. The cut-up beats, breakneck edits and squalls of white noise ultimately exert an enormous barrier to listener pleasure, even as his daunting wall of sound demands to be admired.

the compiler

These compilations reviewed by Rob Young

There's a marked trend in this month's pile towards the compiling of localized, geographically specific, samplers. From the West Coast of America to the South West of England, there are networks of musicians swapping ideas and waiting to emerge as part of a "homegrown" scene rather than from their own strengths. **Los Angeles: Critical Mass** (Mushroom PIS0004 CD) reinterprets "the emerging electronic underground" from the City of Angels, but this lightweight collection has the feel of a musical tourist route through land already claimed: Timmy's "Lost Cities" is a direct rip-off of 4 Herbs' 1994 "Universal Love," James' "Bowl Top" and TIM's "Lose of Warning" nothing we haven't already heard on that other West Coast label, Infectious. "In a place listening on the edge of the continent, they have achieved critical mass," declares the sleeve hopfully.

If Easter was a little nearer the Bristol Channel, maybe you could say the same about the St David's Ambience Society, who constitute **The Future Sound Of Exeter** (ISAS1 CD). The CD induces more days to be day kids were snogging spirits to stuff like Luke Fendley's "Swallow" in the Megapools club out more four years ago. With the possible exception of Jamie Sebby's singing bowl meditation "Approach" and Groovy Bastards' "Electrobragge 19" (shaving a little for print).

Electro with Detroit outfits like Le Car and the Interdimensional Transmissions label), this will be of limited interest to anyone who doesn't know the participants personally.

Pure electronics of a very different sort are the staple diet of the Portuguese record shop and label **AnoAno**. **Way Out: New Music From Portugal Vol 1** (AnoAno HH-001 CD) collects examples of the kind of music they specialise in: avant-garde compositions, often somewhat forbidding, generally impressed on unrecordable electronic systems. No Noise Reduction are a duo including guitarist Rafael Torral who perform live on Portuguese radio stations using modified electronic toys sensitive to body moisture and tongue pressure another duo, Vitrol, combine live musical sound — creaking, rumbling — with digital tools. This collection is the perfect point of entry for plunging further into the thriving Portuguese electroacoustic scene — AnoAno has also released full-length albums by Rafael Torral, No Noise Reduction Nuno Rebelo Goncalo Falcão, Oslo Electra and Free Field.

By complete contrast, Belgium's Sub Rosa hardly ever releases anything from its own country these days. **Water & Architecture** (Sub Rosa SR120 CD) is another of their slightly brainy compositions, this time featuring unprocessed new material from Bundy K Brown's Directions: an electronic piece stomped on by

Doug Scham's sturdy drumming, a stereophonic delight from German export Atom Heart, three choice pieces from the studio floor of Blik, Hyogo's finest (the "Vague Recollection" is a brilliant processed piece which makes you think you're having a percussion roller round the inside of your skull), Sadheer's Magadon-replicating guitar licks, and a short Hospel from sound collage artist AER. Needless to say, the sleeve notes' puns on water and architecture don't clear the picture any.

AER, who turns out to be **Teacher** Jon Wozniak, also crops up on **Design Sampler, J** (Touch TZER03 CD), with a piece that resurrects the lost ambience of the British Library dome. He's in the company of professional location recordist Chris Watson here, plus an engaging variety of tape segments: Philip Jack, a Tactician group featuring Hulaw Znoske, and a Bill gamelan ensemble all captured during rehearsals, an unrecordable Deformation installation, a piece for Bielefeld by Norway's BesideMeir, and unrecordable sundries from Farmers Manual, Roberg & Basker and Ravenscroft.

You're never far away from Panasonic's Mike Vano, in fact, even on a New York compilation like **Process** (Capitoline Productions CWD005 CD), in which ten current Electronics type attempt to explain the rationale and technical models that went into the making of their individual contributions. They needn't have bothered. Apart from the consistently excellent Nonplace Urban Field music of Bernd Friedmann — the only one to attempt to locate Electronics within any kind of conceptual framework — most of the

contributors (Vano, Freddie Fresh, Khan, Surgeon, Si Begg, DJ Cam) are better at doing it than talking about it. Former Hugo Largo violinist Hans Rowe — now trading as Vibro — delivers a fantasia for Amy Odyssey and rhythm box called "Installation View".

With Electronics artists beginning to show signs of developing into smaller, localized states again, some are going further by setting up quasi-religious enclaves. Worship then, at **The Holy Church Of Pharma** (Pharma EFA09317 CD), where rurs give steeper to the Deutsche-Amerikische Reichsheil of no-goods and drop-outs that cluster round label boss Jammet Unit. Pharma regulates Zuluonic, Kerosene, UNO, Terrible, 4E and Lusada Sisters supply the kind of edge-of-hysteria Electro arthropods this label's so good at, the pace more dragon-chasing than incense-waving.

Some of the same artists appear on **Electric Ladyland 5** (Mille Plateaux PPH4B 2XCD), including Khan's 4E also preaching for the "Ighusa Pentecostal De Electronic" and Kerosene's spouting "Scarmage Outpour". But marks also as innkeeper as it gets, the rest of the double CD is devoted to some spectacular dub soundings, notably by Techno Animal (the arty name "Facastor"), Japanese duo Hou ("System Crash"), and Brooklyn Protopop outfit Siolek ("In The Realm Of Infinite Lustre"). But the stars of this show are the confectors from DJ Vaden's Jazz Fudge stable, the dry dynamics of the Anglo-French incarnation Andre Gurov allow the expansive rhythms of the European lineage to become seated within HipHop deftness. □

Label distributors & contacts

Contacts are given for labels without named UK distributors. Labels not named here should be available from specialist retailers such as Depth Charge, Piccadilly, Rough Trade, These, etc. In emergencies, contact local distributors such as Cargo, Greyhound, Homestead Music, Impetus, Kudos, Pinnacle, ReR, SRD. These Vinyl etc. NB Labels and distributors if you spot an incorrect or missing listing in this column please contact The Wire pronto.

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LEO LAB CD 039 NATSUKI TAMURA
A SONG FOR JYAKI

A solo CD by the Japanese trumpeter Natsuki Tamura who can be heard on two previous Leo Lab releases: in duo with a pianist Satoko Fuji (LEO LAB CD 029) and as a member Satoko Fuji's big band (LEO LAB CD 037). A SONG FOR JYAKI demonstrates both Natsuki's phenomenal technique and ability to compose. He is a musician of great originality with extraordinary command of timbre.



LEO LAB CD 040 THE SOEGAARD ENSEMBLE; CRONOX

The Soegaard Ensemble (Jen Krogh - trumpet, Fredrik Soegaard - guitar, sound-processing, Stefan Poulsen - alto sax, computer, Frank Jensen - piano, Lars Juhl - percussion) plays contemporary improvised music using chaos-theory, forwards- and backwards-running time/space structures and imitate orders from the boundaries of science. Guitar solos run by mandelbrot fractal algorithms and abstract sound-structures turning the horizontal time of traditional musical forms into vertical-time sound landscapes, bring this truly contemporary music far into 21st century.



LEO LAB CD 041 PANDELIS KARAYORGIS/MAT MANERI
LIFT & POISE

Panet Pandelis Karayorgis and violinist Mat Maneri stand outside all contemporary trendy whiffs, creating their own space. With this release, their second on Leo Lab, they draw the listener out of his or her standard mindset. As Bill Shoemaker writes in the liner notes: "Call it an extension of cool, aber one that goes far beyond the usual jazz parameters."



LEO LAB CD 042 TRIO ALLIANCE
VYACHESLAV GANELIN / PETRAS VYSHNAUSKAS / ARKADI GOTESMAN

The first release of the Trio Alliance recorded during their extensive tour of Lithuania in 1995. Vyacheslav Ganelin is not trying to reconstruct the music of the legendary Ganelin Trio disbanded in 1987. His new partners, Petras Vyshniauskas - saxophones and Arkadi Gotesman - percussion, have highly individual voices which help them to create highly original, spontaneously structured music. Total duration over 70 minutes.



LEO LAB CD 043 COLLECTIVE 4TET
LIVE AT CRESCENT

This is the third release of *Collective 4tet* on Leo Lab and the first recorded live. George Kerr, the reviewer of the concert in Belfast, Northern Ireland, wrote about the performance: "At times the quartet seem to be on the knife edge of success and failure - often flitting with either side of the divide. The attentive capacity audience seems to add danger to the moment and the catalytic experience forces the players into a fiery freedom of texture, intensity and higher levels of creativity."

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multi media

Rob Young meets the architect of a virtual *Cathedral*

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For some music lovers, it seems, holidays aren't just about getting away from it all, they want to spend even more of that precious leisure time trawling record shops. This new on-line index of specialist music retailers might help those people plan their itinerary (and spending pattern), as well as potentially opening up more business for specialist labels and distributors. Especially an expanding database of information about record shops, with comments and information about the kind of music they stock, it works by entering requests in any combination of the five search fields: shop name, specialist genre, town/city, area/region, and country. When you submit a search, it will supply as much information as its distributors hold on shops fitting your search criteria: contact information, comments about the premises, and a link to that shop's website, where applicable. Quality of information is variable, as it relies totally on public contributions. So, you can add entries on your favorite (or not so favorite) store, simply by filling in the on-line form and flipping it back to the Shop Finder Watch out: therefore, for incense-scented and piping holes — knowing only that the Disk Union shop is located in "Shinjuku district, Tokyo", to quote one entry, isn't going to be much help to anyone.

ROB YOUNG

In the formation of any new frontier, geographical limits tend to be defined by military or aggressive action and exploited by gold diggers and peddlars, with art regulated commerce and religion trailing some way behind the pioneers. American composer William Duckworth wants artists right at the forefront of those seeking to unlock the creative potential of the Internet's fluid recesses. "I see the web as the new artistic frontier," he asserts of *Cathedral*, an ambitious multi-art composition whose foundations he and co-artistic director Nora Farnell laid last summer on the World Wide Web. "The title is related to Gothic cathedrals only in the sense that although they took centuries to build, they were put to use long before their completion, becoming gathering places for the spiritual and artistic elites of the times."

Like the majority of websites, it books down to an area zoned to contain representations of the author's particular spheres of interest. *Cathedral*'s five main themes centre on what Duckworth sees as the building's "decisive moments in human history": the building of the Great Pyramid at Giza, the inception of the Native American Ghost Dance religion, the groundbreaking for Chartres Cathedral, the detonation of the first atomic bomb, and the founding of the World Wide Web. "These five events were selected because they appear to me to be visionary moments that, taken together, recreate the creative myth for modern times in some mythic way, each event is as yet unfinished and unexplored, and each still has the potential to influence contemporary life. While *Cathedral* doesn't offer answers to these inquiries, it does provide a means and a place in which to reflect on them. Unlike the Gothic cathedral, which was rooted in time and place, this new cathedral is movable and accessible to everyone with a computer."

Make that a pretty powerful computer. Mac-based surfer will need a hefty chunk of RAM to run the Shockwave audio-visual streaming software, plus a PowerPC4 in order to run Beatnik, another sound plug-in that's essential to get the most out of the site. If you haven't got the right bits, you'll suffer those all too familiar teeth-grindingly long waits for information to stream into your computer. However, that goes with the territory, as Duckworth points out, the site — and music



William Duckworth

— will effectively remain under construction until a date still to be fixed in 2001 when a 48-hour live and interactive concert — with the composer performing at the hub — will herald the culmination of the project. "Fortunately, web technology is changing so rapidly that it's almost keeping pace with our particular vision of how best to express the music and art of *Cathedral*. Constant transformation is a reality of the web, and any artist putting their work there must adjust to that reality. But by the same token, the web is also adjusting to us."

A keystone of the project is the "Sound Pool" one of the five esoterically titled sections already on-line (others include a "Gloss" displaying short quotes from mystics such as the Sufi poet Rumi or a "Mandala" of designs based on Duckworth's live historical events and an animated segment called "Nostradamus"). The Pool is the door through which the networked audience can deposit their own samples, MIDI files and sounds for the composer to incorporate within the piece. "My intention is that, like a mixer, visitors will never experience the same Sound Pool twice," Duckworth hopes. "At present, listeners can contribute their own sounds as MIDI documents, which I then map to the instruments of the Cathedral band and mix into the pool." On top of this, though, the Beatnik interface means that site visitors will hear these contributions in different combinations each time. "Visitors to the Pool can activate a visual and audio collage of up to eight simultaneous sounds and colours," explains Duckworth, "but each viewer will create a different experience for themselves because the order and placement of the sounds are determined by the image that they draw, influenced by such

variables as mouse movements and placements and the charms of chance."

William Duckworth remains best known for his 20-year-old Minimalist piano work, *The Time Curve Preludes* recorded for Lovely Music, a series of variations whose intriguing shapes are determined by deeply embedded mathematical structures. "Although the medium of the web is vastly different from that of the piano," he muses, "the process of artistic creation for me at least is surprisingly similar. Balance, proportion, form and symmetry are the key ingredients, and my own personal way of shaping my music — through additive and reductive rhythmic structures, the use of the Fibonacci series, and the encoding and embedding of quotation has not changed. Mostly however, what I am talking about lies beneath the surface of the sounds, supporting the actual music in much the same way that steel beams support the edifice of a modern skyscraper."

Back on the site, construction continues. The next wing to be added will be the "Cathedral Chronicle", where the development of this virtual sample will be documented, and visitors' comments recorded. "I view this type of interactivity as a way of bringing music back to its source," says Duckworth. "It wasn't too long ago, after all, that almost everyone in our society played an active role in creating music. And although this is still true in many non-Western societies today we in the West are rapidly losing that vital communal interaction. All too often, music is presented by professionals for passive audiences to experience. I am trying to provide a way to make music engaging and participatory again." The Cathedral website is at www.monocadwell.com/Cathedral

PHOTO: SUSAN SARGENT

on location

Going live: festivals, concerts, clubs in the flesh

per->SON

Germany Cologne Trinitatis Church & Stadtgarten

Lurking in a darkened street running down to the Rhine, in a perpetually rioted-on part of Cologne, the gaunt Trinitatis Church is a godforsaken sanctuary. Its fortress-like shell emits no light, and only the WDR radio truck outside indicates there's life behind its wooden doors. Once inside, it turns out the church really is godforsaken. The interior has been stripped of its religious trappings, save for the pulpit, and in place of ceiling murals, a celestial soundtrack of tiny speakers has been installed by Swiss sound diffuser Andres Bosshard, veteran of aniose bashes like Klangbrücke Bern, which featured electronically linked musicians playing simultaneously in an art gallery and on the historic iron bridge of the Swiss capital.

Compared to such a grand scheme, terrorising Trinitatis Church's faithful with seeping sonic droppings must be small beer. But then size isn't everything. Instead, the very purpose of the per->SON festival is to "consider the human scale in the relationship between people, architecture and technology: to hear whether, via sound, it is possible to address the balance of technological instruments, the human being [per->SON] and the sound in which they seem to exist." Certainly, inviting musicians to pool their improvising skills on sonic architectural projects impossible to realise alone is a sound utopian metaphor. But will it keep the rain out?

Organised by Anthony Moore, once of Sloppy Happy, now Music Professor at Cologne



Ulli and Oliver on

Stephen Whittle



Academy of Media Arts, the festival unfolding over four consecutive nights in January, carries a strong teaching element — perhaps necessary to securing the funds for its principals. Deep Listening pioneer Pauline Oliveros, New York guitarist Stephen Whittle, Belgian cellist Frances-Marie Ulys and London's Scanner (without whom no European New Music fest would be complete). The festival organisers charged these four

performers with curating an evening space of solo and various-group performances, with all of them playing together at the end of each night, to test how far they've come. Whatever its rationale it has pulling power. The church is filled with art patrons, Caligae drone aficionados and students — here on a class assignment, or just to listen?

Well, if they're prepared, says Pauline Oliveros, the spectator's position need not be purely passive in her definition. Deep Listening is a compositional act shared by musicians and audience. Her own role is to hold single tones as easy as breathing for as long as they can satisfy the musical and emotional demands made on them by both performer and observer. As the tones slowly roll through space, they simultaneously sound out and interact with its acoustic peculiarities. Mining music's basest materials over and over each Oliveros piece is alive with the possibilities that attend a new beginning: in her process resides an implicit critique of the culture industry's fixation on speed, novelty and programmed obsolescence. That she has yet to perform in Britain makes relatively accessible European festivals like this all the more attractive (although Oliveros is now scheduled to appear in London in May as part of the LHC's Festival of Experimental Music).

Though well within the spirit of per->SON's search for "the path to sound", Pauline Oliveros's didactic festival opener chimes badly with some of the audience. From the pulpit she sternly observes the flock's reaction to the broadcast of *For Peace*, a short Napoleon-era piece she devised for WOR. Derived from her musicological exercises, it poses basic questions like "Are you listening while you're hearing?" in English and German. Does that seem weird that stupid? Alert some sophisticated dopes? Offered as simple exercises, answering them helps prime the mind to music that is drone-pitched this close to silence. Whatever, the grinning disciples once she begins playing an untuned accordion version of *Crani Music*. The long-torced drones passively squeezed from the bellows hang in the air like phantoms, their sounds slowly decaying and randomly combining to produce translucent harmonic stemmers that glimmer briefly and then die.

On the second night, Andres Boshard launches two sound installations, called 21 and 42 Thunderolls. Based on field recordings from India, he saturates the air with stormy atmospheres, while expertly placed human voices and animal cries simulate distance and different acoustic spaces: in the first he splatters the sound circles with the giggling octave acrobatics of Turkish vocalist Sema, in the second Boshard and his co-creator on the night, guitarist Stephen Vitoello, are joined by per->SON's other resident performers who variously snarl, bow, program or squeeze unsettling noises to seed Boshard's thunder. Yet his swollen storms refuse to burst, affording no relief from the sonic weather. Technically speaking, they're brilliant, but his sheepscapes are essentially special effects in

need of an organising narrative. In contrast, Stephen Vitoello is so unassuming a presence his own tone sketches only make themselves felt much later as a trace memory of a strangely affecting encounter. Solo, his performance of them on various guitar guitars and electronic treatments appears overly busy for such seemingly slight motifs. But later, the impact of his ensemble contributions handily vindicates his methods.

Though he began per->SON as its least known quantity, he'd hitherto worked in theatre and film, as well as collaborating with video sculptor Nem Joon Park. Vitoello's sensitivity to the cues tossed out by the others makes him the ensemble's most magnetic binding agent.

While Vitoello and Oliveros lean towards listening, Francis-Mane Uti and Scannier's Robin Rembrandt are more naturally generous and disposed to chatter. Yet the third night presided over by Uti is, at once the most sensual and the least communicative. Solo Uti's little short of astonishing: her two-bow technique enables her to underscore her mournful lead lines with weird, keening counterpoints: then she switches track and rattles along in more upbeat percussive mode or cuts off to duet with taped cello fragments and soundbites. Themes are repressed, part-developed and just as abruptly dropped. The rapid tempo changes and abrupt mood swings are wondrously exhilarating if overlong. For her duet with Scannier she makes the mistake of instructing him to do his worst. As dialogue it's a non-starter, but as a contest, it's driving enough, with Scannier rapidly jumping from shrill noise assault to quivering sub-bass then rain workouts and on to all-out simpler mayhem. The contest leaves its host looking on adoringly but impotently, at her attempts to re-enter passively and painfully prolonging

curating the festival's closing night: to crossover ideas with Caligae's homegrown Electronica community. On one level, the likes of FX Randoms, C-Schulz & Hapich and Frank Dommett might share per->SON's commitment to finding mutuality in unglamorous sound sources. But frankly, after three days abused to this company's skimming of silence as a means of exploring time and space, the local contingent inevitably came across as stiff and unresponsive as a computer preset (the emulated waveform music of FX Randoms excepted). Moving the location for this last concert to the Stactorian jazz house might have taken per->SON to a wider public, but Scannier isn't about to make any further concessions. On the contrary, he stipulates that the festival's residents don't perform on their usual instruments. Far from being wrongheaded for these conditions, they seize the chance to approach music-making with the innocence, albeit illusory, of children basking in a soundworld from scratch.

RITA KOPF

Vapour 98 UK, London Adrenalin Village

Conceptually, Vapour 98 held in South West London's aptly named Adrenalin Village is quintessentially British: Blossoming from the decay of Britpop fervour, nurtured by a nostalgia for the post-Acid House era and the long-vaunted golden days of rave, bridging the deadened underpays of drum 'n' bass and the kind of electronic music that could hold its head high at any Eastern European multimedia masochology forum, the vapour emanates from a rich compost that is nurturing some unusually eclectic seeds.

There is no ideological consensus between

intensity, take in some atmosphere. Already evident is the sound quality of the RA that ensures overt change in frequency and sonority resolves deep in your internal organs, but without necessarily damaging your eardrums.

In the Warp room next door, Rüdard perform on the square stage in the centre of the room. Apparently familiar with their music, the audience dances as best they can while never taking their eyes off the duo of Ed Hensley and Andy Turner, who remain stock still, bodies poised at 45 degrees over their mixing desk. Being attentive to the musicians in a clubbing environment, how very end-of-the-millennium. Rüdard are marginally less quirky live than on their excellent *Met For Three* album. I sense that the duo are focusing on the job in hand — keeping the rhythms tight and rigorous. It's a joyfully cerebral sound, and the 45-minute set pieces in a moment. Just one to hand over 150 pence for a mini bottle of water before negotiating the chill out zone — in music-free corridor — to reach the Wall Of Sound room and tonight's biggest draw: The Propellerheads.

Propellerheads have been branded with the Big Beat tag. Fortunately for them, Big Beat means Big Business right now: so there's barely room to move in here. On stage the two heads seem a bit taken aback yet greatly pleased by the warmth of their welcome, and respond with an infectious set which plots a trajectory through all the major rhythmic impulses of the moment. One Propellerhead sets behind an actual drum kit while his partner abandons turntables to strap on a bass guitar. At one point Propellerhead One moves to centre stage to become a human baxbox, sampling the beats for immediate recycling. This Hip-Hop reference is aimed at the tendency to



Pauline Oliveros (left) and Andres Boshard

the closing ensemble improvisation restores communication long enough to produce at least two splendid fragments, one centred on a textual interview of Uti and Oliveros's Wisconsin diaries, the other a fantasia pre-coloured by one of Scannier's more beguiling soundscapes and Vitoello's edifying feedback harmonics.

As per->SON's hotline to current musical initiatives, it's inevitably down to Scannier,

the various participants' just a willingness to share the same roof. There are still walls to negotiate, of course: both literal and aesthetic, not to mention what must have been a serious quantity of soundproofing — but there is free passage between them for the adventurous or just plain curious.

There are four rooms to choose from, each hosted by a different label. In the Heavenly room, we watch short film clips repeat to

nostalgia that fuels Big Beat success, as is the lot. Hammond organ sound frequently produced by Propellerhead Two from his skinny keyboard. Unlike their Big Beat peers however, this excellent group aren't mired in stale retro chic. Their set touched on Hip-Hop, Acid Jazz, Techno, Garage, and even the kind of weird Electronica that would have been more at home in

The Warp room where Autoclave are

Annaman Bhowas



already into their single. Autuch's modus operandi is to layer their music with skews of rhythm and waxes of sound. It's a perverse joy watching dancers who have locked into one rhythm track, only to be gradually wrangled by the music's tectonic shifts. It requires some close listening to follow the music's idiosyncratic evolution, even when, as tonight, Autuch's favour clipped beats and fast tempos.

After Autuch, Monkey Mafia sound like a solid proposition in the Heavenly room, but by this point the relative calm of the Soma room is more in order. That is, if more conventionally club-centric Techno can be said to be restful.

We see the remainder of the evening out back in the Warp room (with brief forays into the Wall Of Sound room to catch DJs spinning Dee-Lee's "Groove Is In The Heart" for a new generation). The Aphex Twin has decided he's "only playing other people's records this evening". In his terms, that means you can still just about recognise them after he's put his perverse, belligerent spin on them. He still exercises a predilection for harsh sonorous and distortions which, toward the 6am shutdown, wear ever closer to the extremes of Digital Hardcore. Game for anything, a small core of revelers are still standing at the end

PHIL OWEN

SoundArt 98

UK London Coventry Hall

The organisers of SoundArt 98, a three-day New Music event held in the surroundings of London's Coventry Hall, deny any agenda, they're simply convinced, they say, to "present a slice of what's happening". Nevertheless, to programme modern compositions next to free improvisation is to ask questions about the status of the composer and the score, questions which

I have been effectively denied public artifice since the early 70s. Listeners to free improvisation know it regularly produces great music, but the idea of taking the manual labour of the musician as seriously as the mental labour of the composer is antithetical to the classical world's strict division of labour. In short, SoundArt's programme was a daring move — and as with all experiments, the failures are as illuminating as the successes. In this context, a composer like James Dillon has no trouble in establishing the relevance of his music. Writing pieces for solo voice and solo piccolo (*Sonnet* and *Deflection* respectively) implies austerity, but Dillon's pieces open ears to the immensities to be discovered in split-notes and harmonics. Since improvising saxophone (and SoundArt organist) John Butcher has developed a distinctive style by addressing these very issues, that's just the right frame of mind for listening to him play.

However, with Butcher's solos you miss the dialectic between performer and score: these preparations of intense woodshedding are impressive, but also strangely inert. Whereas a soloing Lol Coelhó opens his ears to the particular acoustics of the venue and in effect duels with ambient contingency — and thus lets you into the process — Butcher shuts you out. It's a dilemma, not a dialogue. However, in duet with an astonishing reworking of his own sounds by Phil Durrant (Sowers), Butcher's saxophone came alive. Durrant's electronics were stomach guggles hallucinated by an artificial intelligence, a vancouverised stream of sonic rectification. Butcher's attempts to weave a pitched reply were extremely moving. Water lapping in the duist closet, excavation of the forgotten zones.

Stranded between institutional disregard and commercial rejection, improvisers make strange alliances. John White is something of

a legend, having contributed Machine Music to one of Eno's *Closure* series in 1976. Unfortunately, his piano sonata "dances" proved to be painful: it was not a good sign when something started as incidental music for a production at the Royal Shakespeare Company. In a quartet improvisation, White's sampler at least provided something decisive compared to Nancy Rutter's classical-musicalist flute, but everyone was a drag on the gobsmacking precision and zing of percussionist Roger Turner. Though an inquiring interpreter of composers like James Caxton and Brian Fennellyrough, Rutter simply hasn't developed the skills required for improvisation. Musicians of the stature of Turner should be heard in full food with their peers — these kind of hating "experiments" are for the beginners.

The quartet of Butcher, Oren Marshall (tuba), Rhod Davies (harp) and Matt Hutchinson (sampler) showed how improvisation could be played. Keeping space between the instruments allowed for gestural clarity. Marshall's growls shaping the piece like



a film soundtrack, Rhod Davies's diabolical harp excavated the loamy emptiness at the core of atonality. The mind expanded to accept of this activity a rotten harm suddenly awash with maggots.

Highlight of Friday night was a performance of Brian Fennellyrough's *Time And Motion Study* (no. 1976). An amplified cello is given a Fennelly rough score and forced to compete with playbacks of the notes they have just produced. Neil Hayde's precision made for high drama, bringing out a garish viciousness of lightning originality. Composition can emulate the highs of improvisation — not by giving the interpreter more freedom, but by pushing the tendency to domination to extremes. Percussionist Annaman Bhowas, in contrast, showed what happens when improvisation becomes an excuse for exotic evocations. When he counted his beats, he gave evidence of his Indian Classical training, but at that was abandoned for a tour of his array of percussion. A tape of hi-fi

atmospheres provided coloration rather than anything musical. The depth and complexity of the table's historical lineage is better served by Taven Singh's hot-improv street approach than by such artifice. Bhowas's improvisation with Nancy Rutter and Neil Hayde was also unmitigated disaster. Things didn't bode well when Rutter announced they'd improvise "for ten minutes" — no one wants to know in advance that an improvisation won't actually change the world! The musicians didn't listen hard enough to each other to negate cliché and provoke thought. Bhowas's tribal drumming — slow and serious — sounded like an excerpt from a nature film soundtrack.

Saturday night started brightly with a suite of Henry Cowell piano sonatas played by Chris Burn. At first the audience respected classical formality and kept quiet between movements, but *Adventures* (1917) — a literally two-fold assault on all things drawing room and genteel — was delivered with such rabid gusto everyone exploded into spontaneous applause. It's odd that someone with Burn's too-precocious untuning should seek to improve, but when interpreting movements like Cowell's — and giving his sympathetic verbal accounts of the pieces — Burn shines.

According to the programme, Matt Davidovsky's *Synchronism No. 7* is a "classic in the electrification repertoire". Rutter pitched early and forceful flute against the tape's early-60s pips and pips, a reminder that for sheer alien strangeness, serial procedures are the magic dose.

Daniel Wrayan Weston has such a delicate and responsive touch that his every note questions the distinction between interpretation and imitating. He made something magical of Kazuo Fukushima's *Chu-U*, while his improvisation with John Butcher was simply dazzling. It is no accident that these particular improvisers favour composition with scored works — on the scrupulous precision and tidiness of their playing is astonishing. Then John Butcher announced a reversion to "true improv room-alive-a-pub stuff" and brought on Rutter and Durrant for a last jam. Rutter played piccolo squalls into the piano. Durrant echoed them back with uncanny fluency, then caught up Durrant's vein in close dialogue. By the end, Durrant was playing fabulous birdsong on his violin, a wondrous feast these Messiaen-heads had no trouble at all in accompanying.

If SoundArt 98 wasn't quite Archie Shepp going "Tootsi tootsi" on the bottom of his horn, it nevertheless spiked the imagination. The Coventry Hall is usually the haunt of Trotskyites and groupies, and in this context bringing improvisation into the orbit of modern composition was a boast from a militant and unapologetic source — one that still pursues its purposeful sonic delirium upstairs in London pubs, unmindful of the economic rewards granted more demonstrative muses.

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First national tour of Turnage's remarkable work which premiered at the South Bank eighteen months ago. Some of the most ravishing music Turnage has written, but then almost everything in *Blood on the Floor* seems to extend the range and power of his expressive world in a startling way. *The Guardian*

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Up against Watson's wall: Paul Schütze, Brian Eno, Diamanda Galas, K. Martin, Steve Beresford

Art, Class & Cleavage: A Quantumcunque Concerning Materialist Aesthetics

By Ben Watson
QUANTUM FEB. 13/14

Watch them go to the wall, in ones and twos, in groups of four and more, felled at a stroke of Weir contributor Ben Watson's pen: Brian Eno, Steve Beresford, David Toop, K. Martin, Paul Schütze, "proto-feminist" proponents of easy listening and whimsy? The lot of them, whose "impotent subversion" is dismissed in a contemptuous footnote. Next up, "form transcendent performance artists" Diamanda Galas and Key Hano, who go down for their "so-called 'interrogation of the body,'" which in Ben's judgement, allows "no hooks for democratic debate." Now they're tumbling like flies. Antacid. Barged on, through the unnamed ones, the hippies, tobi-roses, vegetarians, feminists and animal rights campaigners, condemned for putting their own interests before the class struggle. Kill the lot of them. They look too weird, it serves them right.

Nothing if not ambitious, Ben's messy, massive polemic places art, history and everything on trial for not being exactly what he'd like them to be. As a committed class warrior — he's a member of the Socialist Workers' Party — and music critic, art and culture constitute his theatre of war. From the oddity praising introduction on, Ben makes it clear that this war's going to be dirty. No job is too small, no crack too insubstantial when it comes to building barricades from the corpses of the class war.

Claiming a scientific base to his methods, he crossweaves dialectical materialism with own-brand aesthetics to come up with the concept of Materialist Esthetics — ME for short — for taking the measure of music, art and literature. Notions of "soul," "spirit" and "feeling" are superstitious nonsense that deflect from a true analysis of the work. Yet Ben argues his fellow travellers in the class war invariably fail art by only judging its use-value to the struggle and denying its aesthetic content. Further, not only are they completely lost when it comes to pop culture — corrupted by its relation to commerce — their insistence on its use-value translates into dull, conservative Socialist Realism. Hence Ben's scientific Method, which, he argues, is the first useful tool for appraising the revolutionary, working class consciousness raising potential of modern art. Fine, except once Ben has used ME to whittle away at the 20th century, all you're pretty much left with are the daisies. And Ben's Brian (Ben obviously feels an affinity with his composition for euphoric) James Joyce and Frank Zappa. Failing to match up to his severe, but none-too-clear formal demands, the rest must go to the wall. On the positive side, Ben's passion for Trotsky and the linguist VN Voloshinov is both winning and illuminating. Further, the book's dialectical black note-white note structure of block quotes and Watson commentaries makes it is not short of good reading. But for the most part, ME is not so much a scientific method as a chemical weapon.

If Ben has a winning trick, it's the very inconsistency that forces him to go through hoops to justify every last belch of his hero, Frank Zappa. Yet that same inconsistency

leads to the condemnation of most contemporary music for the not very scientific reason that he can't abide it. Suspiciously, you could ascribe feminine qualities to most everything Ben doesn't like. In tone, jargon and for getting unscientific — his criticism goes beyond masculine to excessively muscular and bullying. His intolerance peaks when his commitment to material values leads him to dismiss the world's religions as ignorant superstition. Well, what do you suggest in their place, Ben? Sending ME missionaries out to convert all those damn fool natives to Watsonism?

Ironically, if he actually committed to his own Method, Ben might have come up with a far more accurate analysis of, for instance, Electronic and all the other musics he hates with a vengeance. Where he can only hear Ambient hushwash (and of course a lot of it) in 90s electronic music, a closer hearing would acknowledge how many of its practitioners (see first paragraph) attack the very stuff of music to critically shape works according to the moral dictates of their raw materials. Additionally, many of them have not only seized the means of production, they control distribution as well.

But for Ben, the alternative route is an impudent diversion from the struggle. In his book, there is no such thing as freedom from the totality of the class war that gives art — life, even — its value. And people should sacrifice their own selfish, short-term yet attainable interests for the good of the whole. Apologetic happy art path that I am, I'll happily go with the likes of The Grateful Dead, who create their own autonomous zone in the real

world, rather than gamble on a place in the heavenly Marxist utopia of the next.

It gets funnier as the book goes on, the joke being the old one of a Cambridge graduate coming on like Celine Wolfe Smith with a deep-eyed vision of the revolutionary potential of the working class. By its end, the calls to revolution repeat themselves as law force, the punchlines coming thick and fast. "Freedom is not to be found while shopping, but in the collective seizure of the means of production: a necessary task." Boom boom

BRUNO KOFF

Listening To The Future: The Time Of Progressive Rock 1968-78

By Bill Martin
OUP COULD FEB. 13/15

How do you cope with going out of fashion? In Bill Martin's case you become more defensive than a shamed, three-in-a-bed Tory politician. Allegedly a history of Prog rock, the bulk of *Listening To The Future* is actually a diatribe against cynicism. According to Martin, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Chicago's De Paul University, cynicism arises from the elite's need to subjugate the working class, and its dominant position in contemporary cultural discourse is the result of the end of the historical dialectic between capitalism and Marxism, all of which would probably come as news to Jonathan Swift, Dorothy Parker and Bill Hicks. This elaborate argument, developed to assert the socio-cultural legitimacy of Prog in

the face of its army of Thirties devotees, is expressed simultaneously as a less than strenuously argued neo-Marxist polemic and a clumsy, achingly PC trawl through "in the Wake Of Powerdown". The result is clumsy, ponderous, heavy-handed — a bit like Prog rock itself!

Martin views cynicism as not only the enemy of Prog rock, but of society as a whole. "The anti-60s and anti-utopian ideology of the 80s found its correlate in the anti-Progressive rock ideology of many rock critics and other appendages of the culture industry." Of course, where cynical rock hounds are the devil's tools, Martin suggests that Prog rock and its own brand of Marxism represent a "generous synthesis" and "an expression of the utopian, radical, and transformative spirit." He fails to address the thorny problem that Phil 71 will love England if Labour win the election. Collins stands as an example of this "generous synthesis." Likewise, he ignores the fact that, with a few exceptions, these hallowed musicians and their "radical" audience were largely the same people who so ably and willingly fell into line behind Reagan and Thatcher. — Rick Wakeman being a particularly appropriate example (Yes, we without doubt Martin's favourite group!)

As you might expect, there are numerous rearward attacks on contemporary musicians ("in scare quotes, natch") "One can read out of an entire issue of *The Wire* and encounter very few 'musicians' who play what used to be called 'musical instruments,'" he sniffs. In fact Martin seems particularly concerned with the magazine — 11 entries in the index, no less — and its coverage of Prog. He describes *The Wire* as a "hermeneutic of progressiveness" and takes Phil Barnes to task — at great length — for its extended interviews with Chris Cutler and Robert Fripp, which appeared in *The Wire* 158 and 159 respectively, and what he perceives to be a somewhat attempt to separate these pivotal figures from the Prog canon — or rather, Martin's definition of it.

Martin invokes Friedrich Jameson's analysis of the death of a historical framework as proof that today's music is nowhere near as good as Prog rock. Surely kids with access to cheap technology producing music without any knowledge of the established rules of music-making has more to do with the liberation of the proletariat than Keith Emerson firing out a Bach arpeggio (which itself seems just as symptomatic of a fragmentary sense of history as Jungle or Harpico). When Martin does actually talk about the music, he speaks to an audience already familiar with Prog rock, which begs the question that if Prog rock has been so uniformly catalogued, then why is he only preaching to the converted, and not out there proselytizing?

Martin is pretty good at situating Prog as an expression of Britain's crossroads status between continental Europe and the US and its growth out of Romantic longings for African

But any intellectual lather he works up is washed away by the stunning banality of his axioms. Try this one for size: "Great music is able to speak to the soul, I think, because it offers (or conspires in a truly magical way)" "it boggles the mind to think that Chuck Berry is now over seventy years old", or, referring to Steve Howe's *Blodax*: "The [group] took its name from the first two letters of its members' last names, and not from any form of the excellent 60s term, 'bitchass'."

PETER SHAPRO

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Muddy Waters: The Mojo Man

By Sandra P. Barnes
FOLK MUSIC PRX 1129

Muddy Waters is such a mighty presence in popular music that he begins to resemble a natural force, an unstoppable current like the Mississippi on whose banks he is imagined to have played as a child. His rich, dark voice and slashing slide guitar were first recorded by Alan Lomax in 1941 on Howard Stowall's plantation, part of a project to chronicle Southern folk music set up by the Library of Congress and Folk University (one of the first American educational establishments for freed slaves). Stowall, inventor of the first burr-clover harvester, encouraged his sharecropper to play and set him up with a moonshine liquor still and a juke-joint. Having got a taste for recording — Muddy received two copies from Lomax in payment — the farmer decided on a career in music. The results were epoch-making. Muddy Waters became synonymous with the raucous sound of Chicago's urban blues, stimulating Alvin Karpis and The Rolling Stones to invent rock as opposed to pop or rock 'n' roll.

Sandra Tootze's modest chronological account is refreshing. She tells Muddy's tale carefully, using snippets from her own interviews with Muddy's family and musicians and quoting from all the published sources it serves as a reminder of the precariousness of musical endeavour. Muddy's music — best heard on his recordings for Chess in the mid 50s or those produced by Johnny Winter for Blue Sky in the late 70s — is so primal and direct it seems inevitable, immovable there — but actually it was a continual struggle to get the right harmonica player, the solid, unshowy drummer, and production values free of psychedelic fads.

The controversy surrounding Bob Dylan going electric is well-documented. Muddy was caught in the same crossfire. In the early 50s he was setting Chicago clubs alight with his heavily amplified group — drums, harmonica, two guitars — but Leonard Chess insisted on recording him in formats that harked back to pre-war blues. He only released after Muddy went to Parkway Records and threatened to have a hit with a full-on electric version of "Rollin' and Tumblin'." Chess then recorded Muddy's

"Rollin' Stone", thereby naming Bob Dylan's most famous anthem, as well as the counter-culture's foremost group and newspaper.

In the early 60s the folk movement, intimately connected with civil rights politics, looked askance at electric guitars. Like any great musician, Muddy was actually after the most dramatic dynamic range he could achieve. He'd play with a loud PA, and then have his musicians play so softly the audience would hang on his every whisper. In 1963 Chess Records opportunistically returned Muddy to an acoustic setting, releasing a record titled *Old Folks*. Tootze points out — with her usual aesthetic correctness — that this did not result in retrospective nostalgia but in a startling and original recording. A youthful Buddy Guy provided sprightly impromptu lead, and the relationship between Willie Dixon's majestic bass and Muddy's sometimes heel-shredding highs and slides was magical. You have to go to the classics of free improvisation to find music where the shaping of silence is quite so deft and suggestive.

Tootze is unimpressed about Muddy's lifestyle

— the whisky, dope, champagne and womanising — but found expression in music so liberating and powerful. Frank Zappa once said that not too many women of his acquaintance liked the blues. That was the opposite of its original social function. "It was sex," said Leonard Chess's son Marshall, describing Muddy's charisma. "If you had seen Muddy then, the effect he had on women. Because blues, you know, has always been a women's market. On Saturday night they'd be lined up 'til deep." New members of his group were impressed by the "blues women" who would enter at the studio to supply the correct ambience for a recording. Simultaneous with this — and Muddy's notorious expelling Coke bottle — everyone stresses what a regal, gentlemanly presence he had. All this can be heard in Muddy's inimitable singing, a message from a culture that doesn't despise and belittle the sexual impulse, that gives it weight and dignity. When John Coltrane took his tape recorder down to Smyth's Corner "to study the superb tone of Muddy's voice" he wasn't just copying a few licks — he was imbibing an entire soul.

Muddy Waters



PHOTO: VAL WINTER

orientation. When poet Matthew Sney says that Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* made complete sense to him — whereas he found Dizzy Gillespie's "Scrapbook From the Apple" "weird" — he is speaking from a rock sensibility that owes its genesis to the blues of Muddy Waters.

Torres has made an important contribution towards understanding the ins and outs of Muddy's bandleading. However, the fact that the best photographs here are by Val Wilmer, and that Torres has to refer to a Charles Shar Murray interview to explain Muddy's stage name, also shows how much English commitment to the blues has contributed. Indeed, if Murray — a critic who connects Muddy's legacy to The Mothers, The Sex Pistols, and James Blood Ulmer — had written the foreword (rather than the inevitable Eric Clapton), this book would have been perfect.

BEA WATSON

Fuzz, Acid And Flowers: A Comprehensive Guide To American Garage, Psychedelic And Hippie-Rock (1964-75)

By Vernon Jorynn

BORDERLINE PRODUCTIONS POB 128

This monolithic gazetteer of the frazzled, freed and freaked out members of the American music scene from the mid 60s onwards is a work of research on a par with the Klugebook. A Crack In The Cosmic Egg Vernon Jorynn is so keen to justify his comprehensive claim that since it was first published in 1993 a staggering 1400 new entries and updates have been added — which can now be bought as a separate section for \$6.95 if you've already got the first edition.

Fuzz, Acid And Flowers features discographies and biogs on the famous (The Doors, Love, Buffalo Springfield), lesser known luminaries (The Chocolate Watch Band, Hill, The Blues Magoos) and the twilight obscurities where nothing is known other than discographical detail. Take a bow Phish, Cyn Zu and Marble Phage.

When the 60s British invasion hit the USA, some popular groups like The Beau Brummels bought into Anglophilia in a big way. Their peculiarly American take on English whyness permeated throughout the byways of the culture into the garages of the American heartland. The alphabetical proximity here of two groups, The Plague and The Plaque, immediately throws up a line of semantic inquiry into the American adoption of pseudo Old English spellings, presumably initiated by The Byrds.

It's easy to romanticise about suburban rock 'n' roll combos having their minds turned inside out by acid, their musical horizons broadening along with their synapses. As the 60s crumbled on, the acid experience had to be experienced first-hand (certainly by The Chocolate Watch Band and The Thirteenth

Floor Elevators) or at least through the word associations of the group name. The doors of perception, music-wise, were boosted open to offer glimpses of music's limitless possibilities. So, conservative group names were out and, circa 1967, in came The Electric Toilet, Waterproof Candle and The Chocolate Light Bulbs. This was the same era that Cilla Black had a hit with that poem to synthetism, "I Can Sing A Rainbow", while Noel Harrison croned his way through the sunbaited gobbledegook of "Windmills Of Your Mind". In a parallel attempt at weirdness some groups basted themselves in the most exorcising puns. Bougieous, Wreck-A-Mended, the Sum Rear duo. But personally I'm fond of In-Sex and K-tics.

As Fuzz, Acid And Flowers is first and foremost a dossier, its critical appraisals are a mere prologue, its descriptions rarely animated. But there are some interestingly contentious assessments, notably of The Grateful Dead's *Anthem Of The Sun*, which will prompt the inevitable response from outraged Deadheads. That said, Jorynn usually hits the mark. For example, his claim that The Outcasts were one of the best psychedelocpunk groups to come out of Texas is spot on. Their superb 1967 single, "1523 Blair", is possibly the most manic two minutes of wire-knuckle music ever recorded. Minneapolis's The Calico Wall only recorded three tracks, but "Right Reaction" is an incredibly maelstrom sound collage evoking nightmarish paranoia, a match for Pere Ubu's "30 Seconds Over Tokyo".

The book goes on to explain what happened after the late 60s fluffball burnt itself out. The label "Hippie-Rock" covers great music, and a great multitude of acts. Although the author recommends the psychfolk album *The Grey Wizard Am I by Gandal*! The Grey, one look at the guy on the LP cover in ten league boots and conical hat is enough to undermine any endorsement. Endlessly fascinating.

MARK BARNES

Available from Borderline Productions, PO Box 3879, Glasgow, G4 7JT

Jazz Heroes

By John Fordham

COLLINS HMK 31 559

John Fordham's book of the Channel Four series, broadcast this month, is a set of jazz biographies that tries, on the way, to be an introductory history of the music. In the opening chapter on Dizzy Gillespie, for instance, there are self-contained boxes of text on Charlie Parker and Miles Davis. The result is an uneasy and not always effective compromise.

Gillespie's vital contribution was to bebop. But quotes from jazz historian James Collier, and Fordham's own comments on the harmonic innovations of bebop are misleading and too brief to be helpful to the general reader (Collier keeps popping up, at some



Enclosure III: Harry Patch

Edited by Philip Blackburn
AMERICAN COMPOSERS FORUM HMK 575

Enclosure III: Harry Patch is the latest instalment from the American Composers Forum's *Enclosure* label, an organisation that has been largely responsible for creating a resurgence of interest in the life, work and ideas of one of the 20th century's most important and original composers. Philip Blackburn's disc, scholarly yet witty through the Harry Patch archive has spawned this exhaustive, singularly produced volume, an "introduction" that also acts as the ideal companion to Patch's *Genesis Of A Music* treatise. It also clears away the mist that shrouded his career by

reproducing in chronological order a mass of relevant writings, scores, drawings, reviews, printed ephemera and correspondence from 1904 to Patch during his lifetime. John Cage, WB Yeats and underground film maker Kenneth Anger are just some of the famous and infamous names who responded to Patch's unique musical vision — along with Miles Davis's arranger Gil Evans, who, impressed by Patch's unique approach to the processes of composing and reproducing sound, attempted to get him a deal with MGM's Verve subsidiary in 1961.

Illustrated throughout with photographic images of the composer (from gurgling infant to silver-haired sage), his arsenal of specially tuned sound sculptures and invented instruments, rare promotional material for his Gate 5 label, plus production stills from many of his elaborate theatrical pieces, these texts and personal fragments combine to produce an intimate portrait of Patch the artist and dreamer. Equally revealing is Blackburn's concluding chapter "Did And New Thoughts After And Before", which, together with the supplementary "Notes And Comments", illuminates several dark corners of Patch's life (and death). The result is a book which renews the soul of this remarkable creative force and gives work fresh teeth on the bones of a body of work which is only now being given the full attention and respect it deserves.

ANDREW ROSSCOTT

Available from American Composers Forum, 332 Minnesota Street, Suite 6-145, St Paul, MN 55101, USA. For 001 612 291 2978, e-mail: arnold@amcomforum.org. Copies can also be ordered from *Real Music*, 79 Beulah Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey, CR7 8JG. Tel 0181 771 1063.

length and for some reason never very memorably.) As with all jazz revolution, in any case, a new rhythmic conception was the driving force. The Thelonious Monk chapter gets the balance better. Monk's style is probed insightfully, with interesting quotes from Orin Keapnews, his producer at Riverside Records, and a deeper assessment of what made his approach so revolutionary. The John Coltrane chapter is the best. The sea-change in Coltrane's style recorded in 1961 at the *Village Vanguard* is described by Fordham as a "rite of passage" that forever changed jazz's sensibility.

If the first three chapters mostly tread well-known ground (those on the remaining "heroes" — and heretofore cover less familiar material), Fordham succinctly explains Gerry Mulligan's achievement in the *Birth Of The Cool* group and his quarrel with Chet Baker. Sharp quotes from bassist Bill Crow capture Mulligan's "egotism". Was he always striving for perfection? "In others," Crow says. The most interesting chapter is on Wes

Montgomery, surely an under-researched figure. Orin Keapnews is unarguably on the poignancy of the guitarist's MDR makeover by producer Cecil Taylor.

The only singer in the set is Ella Fitzgerald. Fordham explains how her songbook series — Jerome Kern, Cole Porter, Rodgers and Hart and so on — pioneered the "concept album", probably the first instance in either pop or jazz (though I reckon Sinatra just got there first). I guess you couldn't quibble with her inclusion, according to a Gary Giddins quote, "You had to be almost dead not to love what she was doing." But while I'm dawdling my last breath I'll quickly add that Fordham doesn't consider Ella a main problem — she was an athlete with no idea of how to interpret a song lyric. *Jazz Heroes* is lavishly illustrated, but there are better introductions to jazz, including those by James Collier and Edward Lee. But especially on Mulligan and Wes Montgomery, Fordham offers useful information not readily obtained elsewhere.

ANDY HAMILTON

new notes at a glance

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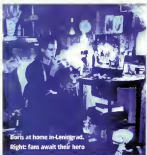
I was early August, 1985, and Boris Grebenshikov was telling me in fluent, Brit-accented English that he'd wanted to be a rock star from the time he was 12, "because there was no place in society for someone like me." We were sitting in the kitchen of his communal apartment in central Leningrad, which was bohemian bordering on the squalid.

Pre-Gorbachev, but at the beginning of the collapse of the Soviet Union, Boris wore his hair long and shaggy with a headband. In his early 30s, he was the leading light of the Soviet rock underground, or unofficial scene. That meant he didn't produce records, tour or appear locally in formal concerts, couldn't buy equipment through the government-sanctioned Musicians Union, but neither did he have to win its approval for his songs, or depend upon its bookings for his career.

Officially, Boris had no career. He had an undemanding, low-level, part-time day job. He wasn't working as an engineer, the profession for which he'd trained. Nonetheless, his music was widely known. "I make my albums on tape," he explained. "I give the tapes to my friends, and they are duplicated on tape, and passed on, all over the country. I know this because I get letters from fans. Perhaps there is only one person in a town who writes to me, but letters come from everywhere in the Soviet Union."

He was proud of his reputation, and even prouder of the four-track tapes he played for me on a battered reel-to-reel machine, which he slapped every time one of the stereo channels went out. On one tape he'd cannibalised early 70s Kinks songs for Dave Davies's lead lines. He'd concocted his own version of Sgt. Pepper, lifting George Martin's chorus of French horns, changing the melodies but retaining the phrasings. He was fascinated by Celtic lore, believing there was a link between early Anglo-Saxon and early Slavic peoples, and for his research had studied *Lord Of The Rings*, among other fables. Considering himself a spiritual person in a culture where "people would deny there's a sun even if they're standing in the sunshine," Boris listened away to The Incredible String Band and UB40. He apologised for never having gotten into The Clash. "In theory, I liked them, but I couldn't enjoy listening to them."

Another tape he played me contained an improvised, electronic version of The Doors' "The End," with organic wailing by gypsy vocalist Valerina Ponomareva, who had long participated in Leningrad's underground rock and avant-garde jazz culture, but had recently accepted official status. A few days later, I saw Ponomareva on Soviet television, dabbed with make-



Boris at home in Leningrad. Right: fans await their hero



up, singing an overwrought ballad and dancing in a tute. Boris and his immediate family shared their apartment with about half a dozen other people, who came and went through his "office," an unassigned room he'd appropriated, as though it was everyone's den. Did he get along with all his commune-mates? "Well, The young man who just looked in on us, for instance," he said by way of reply, and referring to a recent visitor. "He was lately released from prison, where he served four years for burglary. Sometimes I think the KGB has put him in this apartment to keep them informed of what I'm doing. He's very curious, wants to know everything, asks a lot of questions." When I leave Boris's apartment to catch the subway before it closes down for the night, a door on the fourth floor landing opens a crack, and the pale young man's face is illuminated by the bulb behind him. He glances at me, shuts the door. He hovers about during the rest of my meetings with Boris.

"The government is aware of all my activity," Boris tells me. "I'm not against the government, I'm very much for the government. I do not take any money from it, I'm allowed to do what I want to do. Of course, they could stop me whenever they want to, but why should they bother? I'm only a musician. I think I'm working under the best of conditions." In 1988, Boris would move to America and sign a brief, star-crossed deal with CBS. But at the time I met him, he still imagined that rock stars in the States must find wealth and fame distracting. It was possible he was being ironic, but he seemed truly dedicated, without pretense or urgency or apparent bitterness.

I'd missed seeing Boris perform with his electric group Aquarium. They held open rehearsals at a factory hall, and gave infrequently mounted performances,

promoted solely by word-of-mouth, in a loft inhabited by the avant-garde Zero artists group (squatted directly across the street from the KGB's Leningrad headquarters). But on my last night in the Soviet Union, a Sunday, I was invited to a clandestine house concert in an apartment building at the end of a metro line. I wasn't given the address, instead I was picked up at the station by Sergey Kuryokhin, the pianist, composer and leader of Popular Mechanics who died last year, and who was always humming and whistling like he had a Casio implant in his head. With him was Boris's pale young neighbour.

Boris sat on the floor of a living room lit by candles, wearing a harmonica rack but no shirt, his acoustic guitar in his lap. The audience consisted of 18 men and women, including two American students who were celebrating their wedding and had brought a couple of bottles of vodka. A violinist, a cellist and a flautist backed up Boris, who mostly strummed rhythm, and sang his original lyrics in a soft but impassioned voice, reminiscent of Bob Dylan, if not Woody Guthrie. Boris might have cited the Soviet actor-singer-songwriter Vladimir Vysotski, whose grave, on the anniversary of his death, is mobbed like Presley's Graceland mansion.

After more than an hour, Boris sang The Grateful Dead's "Uncle John's Band" and a Buffalo Springfield song, in honour of the Americans, then Sergey sat at the piano and, with Boris, played a simple blues. One of the Americans improvised a lyric. I didn't take notes, and it's now long forgotten, but it was supposed to be funny, wry, sad yet a protest, meant to acknowledge we'd all known troubles, but weren't about to complain that life or politics are killers. They are, of course, everywhere. □



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